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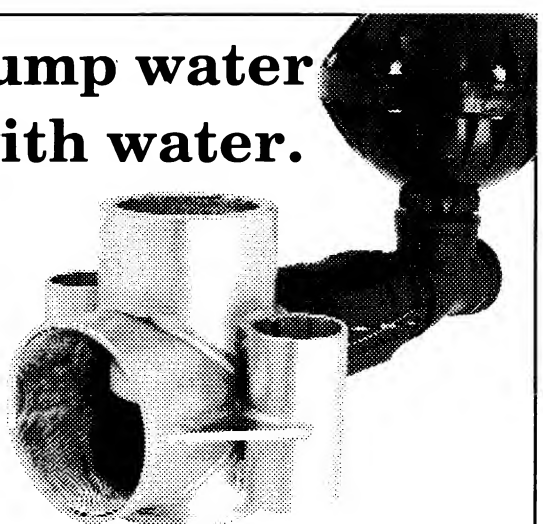
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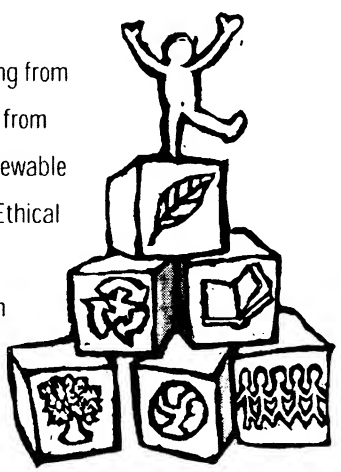
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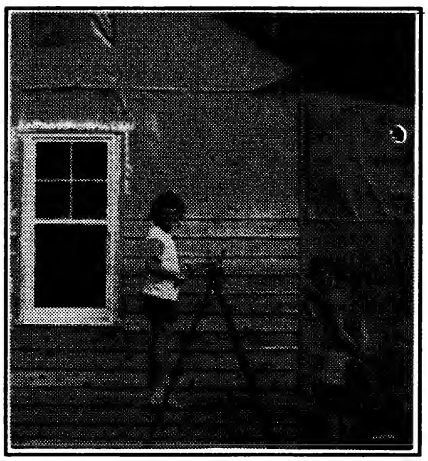
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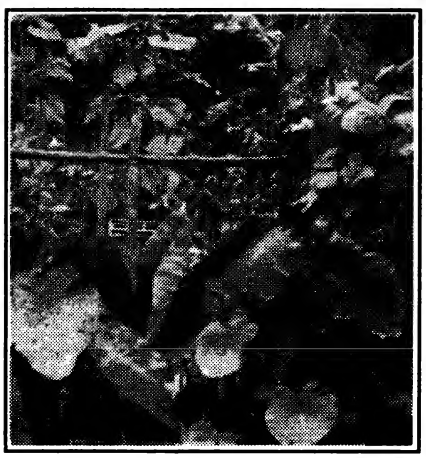
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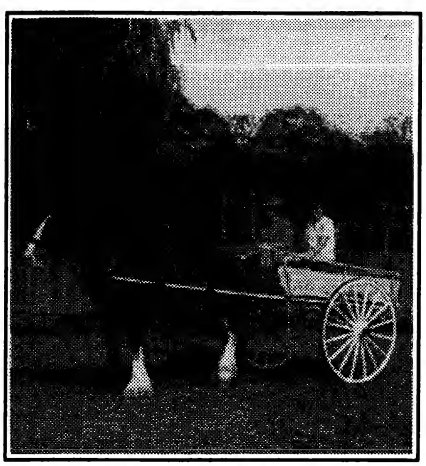
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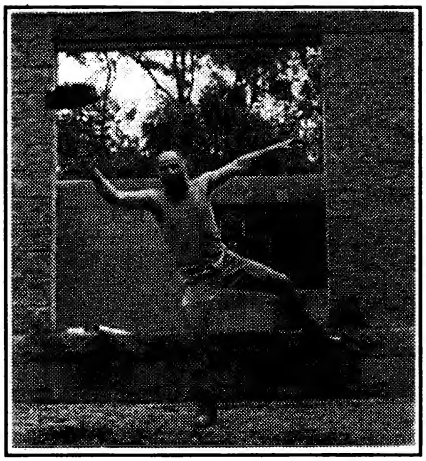
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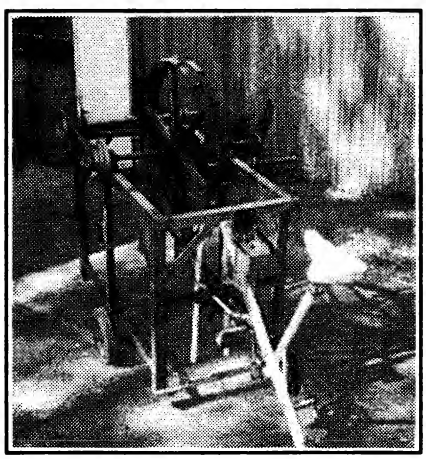
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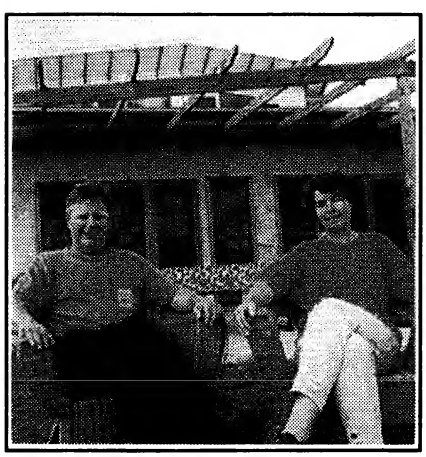
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Front Cover: Anne Stelling and John Walker outside the innovative straw bale house they built, with a little help from their friends, at Wooragee, near Bright, Vic. Read about their building experience, page 13.

Back Cover: Roy and Judy Clark with Gypsy, Reserve Champion at the Cobargo show. See Judy's tips for safe handling of heavy horses, page 57.

Edited by Megg Miller and Mary Horsfall.

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GUMNUT GOSSIP

by Megg Miller.

Who was it that instigated the myth of the paperless office? Wherever you look in the Grass Roots building there is paper, hardly surprising considering the nature of our work. It's not that we are excessively untidy either, we'd never find anything if we were. No, it's related to the amount that comes into the office or that we generate in-house. It would be marvellous if there was time to sit back and read it all; farming and environmental magazines, newsletters, papers, lots of interesting books. Then there are masses of letters, faxes and emails. We produce lots of dummy pages to create a single, perfect magazine page, so there are plenty of A4's in the recycling box. Despite our best efforts we still produce a lot of waste paper. On busy days a gluey piece will often adhere to a shoe, and loyally follow the owner around. Mary and I swear we had less waste paper back before we set our sights on the paperless office. The idea is great, and it's certainly worth striving for, but we're still not sure it evolved from a practical basis.

The new tax system generates even more paperwork. Part of the requirement for us is to have on record statements from writers describing the nature of their work; whether it is recreational or business orientated. The notes I've received from this group of contributors have been a revelation. Expecting a brusque, formal couple of lines detailing their situation, I've encountered instead a myriad of unique and thoughtful explanations. 'A hobby inspired by a desire to promote interest in organic farming methods and a sharing of knowledge,' Kel Connell elucidated. Wendy Stanyer, who penned the advice on giant carrots last issue, explained her contributions were 'basically for relaxation'. Roberino's answer? Pages and pages of handwritten philosophy. What treasures our writers all are and what wonderful surprises the sombre minded tax inspector faces, should he or she want to visit and check our records. The BAS restructuring has added extra work as well as record keeping and paper use, but the individuality of our readers and writers has given it an unanticipated sparkle. Thanks authors for lightening up such a tedious, time-consuming part of business.

Although it's early November as I pen this, the first Christmas cards are beginning to trickle in. Dear Stan Polley is again the first, he's so quick off the mark we received not one but two cards around midyear. Stan is of mature years and gives generously to his local community in the Western District of Victoria. We hoped the duplication of cards was the result of a hiccup in the Chrissy card list and not cynicism about the efficiency of Australia Post. Good on you Stan, it's great to know you're still going strong. A few words of appreciation too for those who drop us a line and card each year; we all enjoy catching up on readers news and the cards add a festive air to the office.

We've included in this magazine a handful of delightful Christmas stories from some of our regular writers. They are as interesting and diverse as the readership. We all have our rituals and special ways of celebrating and it's fascinating to catch a glimpse of how others experience or have experienced this commemorative event. As a child biscuit making was the first sign in my home that Christmas was truly imminent. The first week of December saw endless trays of star or tree shaped biscuits cut from dough and baked, and then lavishly dripped all over with coloured icing and 100's and 1000's. We ate and licked as we worked and those biscuits always tasted magical. No doubt other families had similar milestones to denote the start of the festive season and which provide material for reminiscing today. It's fair to say that the togetherness experienced while working as a family or unit is just as important as the tangible outcome, be it biscuit making or decorating the tree, and is something that has no commercial equivalent.

The importance of family at this time of year confronted Mary recently and she asks that readers open their arms to wayward or spirited members that have loosened their familial ties. In Melbourne for the day with her healthy and happy Year 12 daughter Stacey, Mary had come across a young girl of similar age with a babe in a pram, literally begging in the streets. Discussing the tragedy of this situation at work resulted in both of us becoming teary eyed, especially when we thought about our own kids and counted our blessings. The image this young girl presented was so sad to contemplate, her situation reflecting that endured by many other homeless youngsters and we unconsciously snivelled our way through the next half hour until Sue asked if we both had a cold. 'We're snivelling, not sniffing, Sue, so rest assured it's not a cold'. There's little more I can say, but to encourage everyone to stretch the Christmas spirit to include those who may need a little extra love or assistance.

We've gained a new addition to our work team. Sabrina is a lovely young person with lots of the skills we wanted as well as a passionate interest in publishing. She has tested the waters this last week and despite the deadline chaos, thought the job fantastic. We're all sure she will continue to feel this way. Prior to this she worked in a newsagent, so was familiar with magazines and especially GR, but from the other side of the counter. As she becomes familiar with the requirements of the job, Natalie won't have to help out so much and can get on with her urban lifestyle. She has been a real brick helping here as well as working part time in Melbourne. We'll be very sorry to see her go and will miss her wacky humour and arty approach to life. Nat, enjoy the world of adventure that lies ahead.

The keen and hardworking team that work alongside Mary and myself to bring you your favourite magazine – Sue, Sally, Sunshine, Noreen, Natalie and Sabrina, together with business partner David, join me in wishing you all a happy and safe Christmas. If you can make it simple and satisfying, it's sure to be sustainable. Merry Christmas.

NUTTING IT OUT

People's dreams of paradise take many forms; life in a walnut grove must be one of the more unusual variations. Owning a mature walnut grove steeped in historical associations, becoming a part of nature's cycle, and harvesting the seasonal abundance does conjure up some romantic notions, not all of which are borne out in the practical realities of everyday life. But, as Jude Aquilina has discovered, being the Lone Lady of the Grove does have its rewards, not the least of which is the comforting feeling of the 'hands of perpetuity' resting on her shoulders.

'You must be nuts,' my parents once said when I splurged all my pocket money on a bag of fresh walnuts from the local continental deli. I loved nuts as a child, even risked old Mr Clayson's Alsation to scavenge beneath his overhanging walnut branches. Now, thirty years later, I am surrounded by nuts and hate the sight of them.

I married Daniel, a walnut farmer, for his husky voice and nut-brown hair, and moved from suburbia into the Adelaide Hills. When I first saw his mountainous cache of nuts on the drying racks, the squirrel in me was instantly attracted.

My first year on the farm, 'Walnut Grove', was hectic. Besides having our first child and working part time, I helped Daniel and my brother to rebuild and extend our weatherboard cottage. The original cottage was once located in a neighbouring town and was towed by camels to our property. It was placed at the end of the walnut grove and had served for the previous 80 years as a workers' dwelling for the nearby homestead.

Our property has 120 huge walnut trees, which were planted a century ago by a pioneer woman in her nineties. Local history books say that she brought the nuts from England and planted them by hand. Sometimes, I think of her, when I'm working under the filtered green light of walnut leaves or when bare branches marble the winter sky, and I thank her.

I often think of the families who lived in our cottage when there was only one bedroom and a kitchen with a dirt floor. A family of eight lived here in the 1960s. We found their garbage pit when we dug the foundations for the extension. I now have a collection of old Bonox jars, Bobo Cordial bottles and opaline medicine bottles. I feel a pang of nostalgia when I imagine our predecessors' children lining up for their tin cup of Bobo raspberry cordial or weekly dose of Faulding laxative.

One of our first renovation tasks was to replace the white-ant-ridden rafters. This was my first negative walnut encounter, because when we pulled down the ceiling I was showered with dusty walnut shells. Rats had feasted in our roof for the past 80 years. Half a metre of dust, shells and rat nests were barrowed back to the grove. I realised with trepidation that rats were to be part of my paradise. I bought two cats.

We were regular visitors to salvage yards, where we'd rifle through stacks of doors and measure up windows. I drew plans for the council. Friends and neighbours donated materials and time. The sounds of hammering and chattering drifted up the walnut grove. Shared work brought our families closer together. Even grumpy Uncle Jack swallowed his tongue and donned a nailbag.

Every plank of wood had to be stained by hand. I was chief stainer while the men nailed planks. I'd set up trestles under the walnut trees. On hot days their shady leaves were welcome. In that first summer, I remember looking up and seeing the green knobs of developing nuts and my tastebuds tingled.

After long days of working on the house we'd stand back and look at our achievements. Then we'd crack a few nuts and a bottle of champers while we all sat around a table under the walnut trees, talking and planning the next stage.

In that first autumn we worked like bees to get a roof on our hive before winter. The outside walls were not clad and all that separated us from the elements was blue foil insulation. One dear old neighbour stopped to tell me how much she liked the colour we'd painted the house!

Along with our new roof came frosty nights. I became reluctant to get out of bed onto cold cement floors. The house had trails of mats. This was also the time of the first bombings: at the slightest breeze the ripe nuts announced themselves by grenading our new iron roof. In a storm they drummed like a heavy metal band. Next came the armies of sulphur-crested cockatoos, galahs and corellas. During their early morning raids they screeched and hurled nuts above our bedroom. How I hated that 5am wake-up call; a crying baby, mingled with bird screams and pinging nuts.

In that first walnut season I picked with a vengence. My lower back ached, my baskets toppled over and I picked a lot of black reject nuts, but the sheer novelty of it kept me going. Daniel's parents and grandmother came to help. I remember Nanna, bound in scarves and a floral apron. She'd prod the leaves with her walking stick, divining hidden nuts. We'd all work around a tree, each with our own wire basket, talking and laughing, with our bottoms up. Sometimes we were attacked by voracious March flies. Often we'd hear a rustle in the dry leaves and see a brown snake disappear down its hole.

My hands turned dark brown, criss-crossed with lines. I had to explain to people that it was walnut stain, or they'd look at me in disgust. I read that walnut juice once saved a family of New Zealand pioneers. Under attack by Maori warriors, they painted themselves with walnut juice and ran naked through the mob to safety.

After picking every day for six weeks the novelty was wearing thin. Then came the heavy rain and picking was replaced by days spent in the drying sheds between long shelves of nuts. Together, Daniel and I would roll and toss the walnuts to prevent mould. We'd pick out the black nuts and have a nut flinging contest. Once I even tried lying on a shelf for a walnut back massage, but it was agony.

Our customers were mainly continental deli owners, who'd come and buy hundreds of kilograms at at time. I liked to crack a few nuts as we did business; mutual munching produced more sales! Sometimes the driver would drop his family in the walnut grove to steal nuts while I served.

My first winter at Walnut Grove was bitterly cold, but under our newly insulated roof I felt like a fairy tale princess as we sat by an open fire, blissfully shelling and nibbling. Then we'd toss the husks into the fire and watch the sparks rise up into the chimney. Our daughter would sing 'twinkle twinkle . . .'

I sought out and cooked every walnut recipe I could find: pickled walnuts, walnut soup, walnut fritters, walnut paste . . . I was in walnut heaven. I even started making walnut ornaments: baby Moses in a walnut crib, turtles and owls. It was Daniel who first asked for a meal without walnuts!

Now I too am walnut saturated. Walnuts have taken over my life. I hear them being rolled along our hollow walls at night by a new generation of rats. My broody chickens sit on walnuts. There are walnuts in the gutters. The rainwater is brown. The compost heap is 90 percent walnut shell. My family no longer accepts walnut gifts.

I look at the swelling green knobs of this year's crop and curse them to the kernel. I am now sole walnut picker. Nanna died, our parents are too old and all our siblings have full-time jobs. However, this annual dread of nut picking wears off after the first couple of days, as does the sore back. As Lone Lady of the Grove, I set my own rules: pick whenever I like; let the cockies eat the small nuts; bring wine and take long breaks in the shade. Sometimes, my friend Sheryl helps, and even though our chins wag we can fill seven sacks on a good day.

The sky at nutting time is usually vivid blue and new grass velvets dry ground. I often sit leaning back on a sack of nuts, dreaming up lines for poems. Sometimes I can see Nanna in her head scarf, stooping into a nest of leaves. Sometimes I crack a nut and eat it for old time's sake. I feel the hands of perpetuity resting on my shoulders.

JUDE'S FAVOURITE RECIPES

Walnut Drops

These delicious European petits fours are lovely served with coffee. Makes 24.

100 g walnuts, finely chopped
150 g butter
50 ml brandy
150 g sifted plain flour
150 g sugar
pinch of salt

Preheat the oven to 175° C. Cream butter and sugar, sprinkle in salt and add flour. Moisten it with brandy and mix. Add the walnuts and stir well. Drop small spoonfuls of the mixture onto a lightly greased baking sheet and bake for 20 – 25 minutes.

Tarator

This yoghurt, cucumber and walnut soup from Bulgaria is served chilled. It is great in hot weather with cold, crisp



Jude's husband, Daniel (left), and brother, Robert, cladding the cottage – walnut trees in background.

wholemeal toast. Serves 4 – 5.

1 medium cucumber
750 ml natural yoghurt
750 ml iced water
12 walnuts, peeled and chopped
3 – 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 tbsp olive oil
salt

Thinly peel and dice the cucumber, sprinkle lightly with salt and put aside for about 30 minutes. Beat the yoghurt and mix with the iced water. Wash the salt from the cucumber and pat dry. Rub a large bowl generously with garlic, add the cucumber, the diluted yoghurt, the remaining garlic and the walnuts. Mix well, beat in the oil and continue beating until the oil is well mixed into the soup. Divide into soup bowls and chill before serving.

Walnut and Chocolate Roll

This sweet roll looks like a salami. It is soft, with the texture of fudge. It is extremely good to eat and very simple to prepare. Serves 4.

150 g fine sugar
300 g shelled walnuts, finely minced
juice of 1 lemon
75 g cocoa
icing sugar, sifted
200 ml cold water

Mix the cold water with the sugar and cook to a thickish syrup. Add the walnuts, lemon juice and cocoa and cook this mixture until it forms a thick mass, stirring constantly. Sprinkle a pastry board generously with icing sugar and turn the walnut mixture onto it. Roll into a long sausage shape. Wrap it in kitchen paper and keep in a cold place until it has hardened. Serve cut into thin slices which will look like slices of dark salami. Other nuts may be used, such as almonds and hazelnuts.

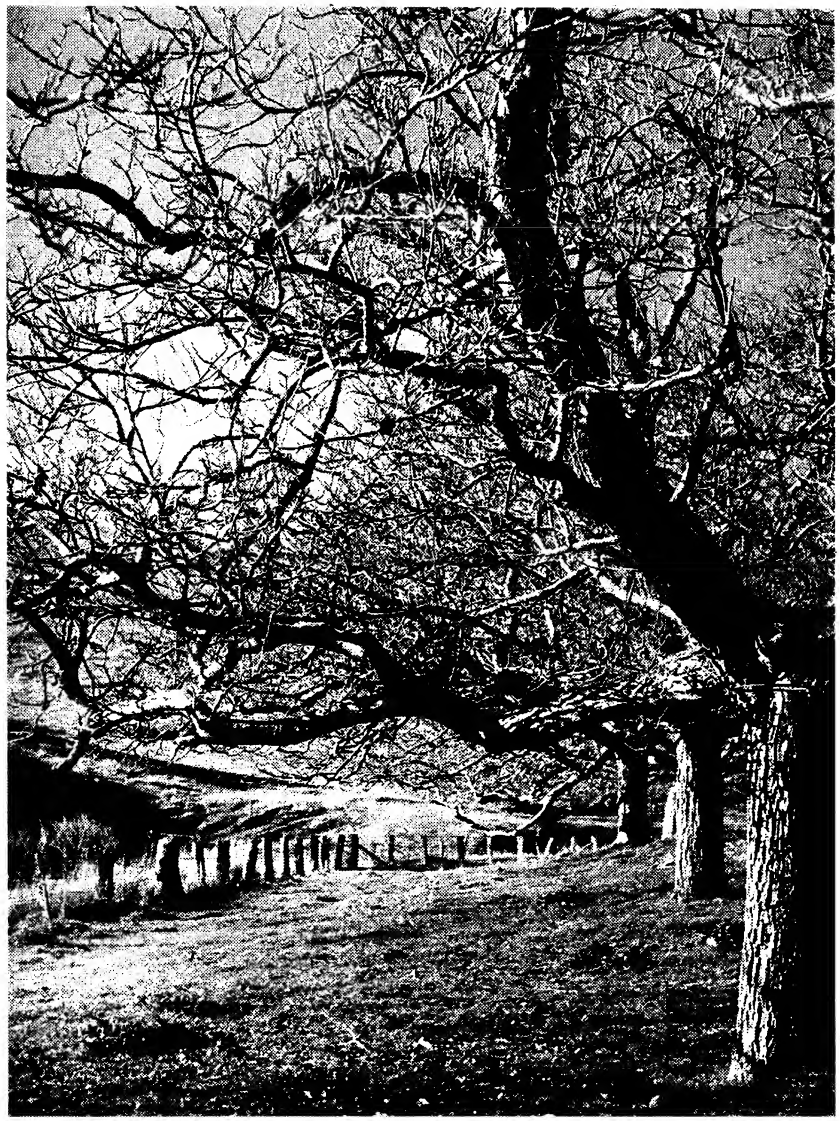
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The walnut grove in winter – steeped in tradition, as shown by the original 100-year-old fence.

Pickled Walnuts

Gather walnuts before their hard shells form, usually from late November. To test the walnuts, prick them with a darning needle and discard any in which the beginnings of a hard shell can be felt.

Place the nuts in a bowl; be careful which bowl as it will be left with a dark stain, so a glass bowl is best. Make up a brine mixture of 60 g salt to each 600 mm of water. Pour the brine over the nuts and weigh down with a plate to make sure they remain submerged. Leave for three days, drain and place in fresh brine for a further three days.

Drain the walnuts and leave spread out in a single layer to expose to the air in a warm place, in sunshine if possible, until they blacken. This should take one to two days. Pack into sterilised jars and cover with cold spiced vinegar, sweetened if desired, and seal. Leave for at least four weeks before using.

These are great with all cold meats, and cheeses.

Spiced Vinegar

5 cups distilled white vinegar
1 tbsp black peppercorns
1 large piece root ginger, roughly chopped
1 blade mace
1 tsp allspice berries
1 tsp salt

Bring all ingredients to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes, leave until cold and strain.

FRIENDS NEAR AND FAR

by Margi Jackson, Wonthaggi, Vic.

Some time back (in GR 111) I wrote an article about my urban permaculture property in Williamstown (western suburban Melbourne) in which I stated my strong and ongoing commitment to living sustainably in the suburbs. Well, guess what?. . . I'll never say 'never' again, having made the move this year to semi-rural Wonthaggi (south-east Gippsland); in the process exchanging an established, intensive food-forest garden for an almost bare (except for expanses of lawn) quarter-acre block.

As the end of our first year here approaches, my thoughts occasionally turn to the prospect of the first Christmas away from my previous home of more than 20 years.

We don't have a large, extended family, so Christmas has never been the extravagant gathering of the clans that it is for so many. (An experience I sometimes envy, but more often feel lucky not to have to endure – friends' stories of family Christmas debacles have alternately made me laugh or shudder.)

Nevertheless, Christmas has always been a time when I reflect on the meaning of life and the passage of time (not least because my birthday falls the day after) and when my thoughts turn to friends near and far. In these days, when so many of us seem to have lost the art of letter writing, Christmas is the perfect time to make the effort (perhaps create your own personalised card) to get in touch with friends. Just a short note will assure them that we care about and remember them, and not only at Christmas time.

Christmas took on a far greater significance for me after the birth of my daughter – then we became a family. Every year for the past 12 years we have made a great celebraton of decorating the Christmas tree and following all the time-honoured traditions, including leaving a glass of beer for Santa Claus and carrots (organic, home-grown of course) for the reindeer.

A focal aspect of pre-Christmas activities at Williamstown was always the preparation of homemade cards and gifts. In my garden I had a huge and very productive cumquat tree, the fruit of which was ceremoniously harvested and bottled with sugar and brandy, resulting (after six months or so) in a superb cumquat liqueur and fruit which could be pureed and used as a sophisticated ingredient in ice cream or a topping for pancakes – by those recipients who had the patience to wait the requisite six months, that is. Strangely, when I visited my old house a few months ago, the new owners told me that the cumquat tree had died a short time after our departure. I try not to read too much into this.

I guess it will be a couple of years here at Wonthaggi before the trees I am planting will begin fruiting. Until that time I will greatly miss the satisfaction that comes from harvesting and sharing the bounty, with the compliments of the season. Carrots, of course, grow faster than trees, so at least the reindeer won't miss out this year!





The potted Christmas tree has travelled from Williamstown to Wonthaggi, where it will once again display treasured decorations, many made by Putu (right), symbolically linking the old life with the new.

Our potted Christmas tree has made the journey to Wonthaggi with us, and this year, as always, will be festooned with the treasures and trinkets we've collected over the years, including decorations handmade by my daughter at kindergarten and primary school. Christmas cards will hang across the mantle, and we'll be reminded of all the wonderful times we've shared with good friends over the years. So, Williamstown or Wonthaggi, home is where the heart is. Peace and goodwill to all, no matter *where* you live!

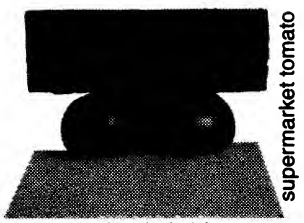
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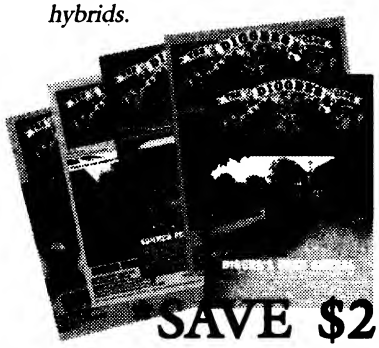
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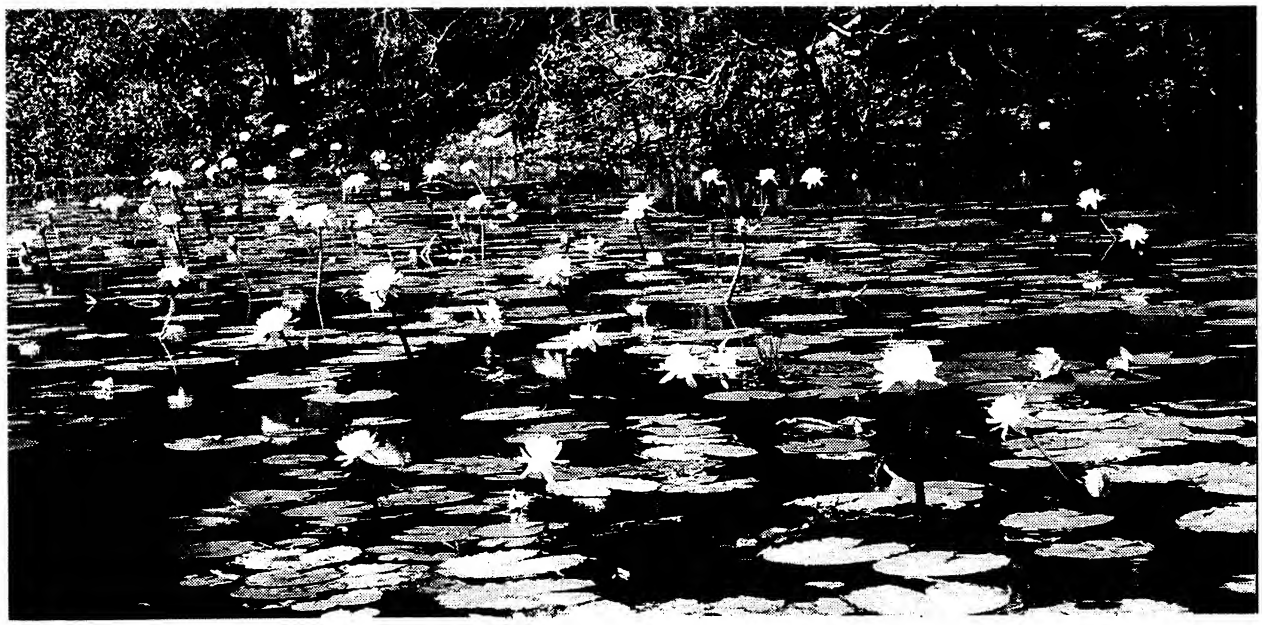
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KAKADU DREAMING

by Sue Keggie, Jabiru, NT.



Imagine camping under a canopy of trees on the beach, the waves softly lapping the sand as the tide has turned, the moon shimmering down on the water, the campfire softly glowing and the billy starting to bubble. Or walking beside a pink and blue water lily-covered billabong watching the bee-eater as he swoops down for a drink, the brolga gracefully foraging on the other side, the sea-eagle that swoops down and rises up carrying a fish in his claws. Or sitting on a rock high up in the escarpment, watching and listening to the water tumbling over the rocks into a crystal clear pool below.

These beautiful spots are where my husband and I live and work – in Kakadu National Park. We manage the northern entry to the park; which means, in effect, we collect the fees to enter the park, hand out maps and give information about the park. We work 12 hours a day five days a week, so the entry station is virtually our 'home'. We have a microwave and fridge, but we do a lot of our cooking in our camp oven out the back of the entry station and tourists often comment on the tantalising smells around dinner time.

We have a small patio area at the back of the entry and it is here I have my vegie garden: carrots, radishes and leeks in a box – the beans and peas withered – plus six tomatoes in individual pots and some herbs. I make my own yoghurt and sometimes bake bread in our camp oven, just to keep my hand in – it's got nothing to do with a yearning for 'proper' bread!

The park itself is enormous – 20,000 square kilometres – and we are constantly amazed at the people who come in for just one day or so. Kakadu is so much more than rushing from one rock art site to another or going on a cruise. Kakadu needs to be savoured slowly; you need to take time to sit quietly, to listen, to look and to feel.

This is a land whose vegetation alone can teach us so much about survival, plants either adapted or died out. Here the eucalypt content is not as high as down south, so the vegetation is less combustible, and the leaves will turn their narrow side to face the sun rather than expose the larger portion and lose more moisture through evaporation. The evergreens lose a substantial proportion of their leaves during the dry season so less energy is expended by the tree to survive.

The bird life is amazing and we enjoy their antics. Each morning my husband drops me off a kilometre from the entry and I walk in. I love that time of quietness. However, when the woolybutts are in flower my quietness is shattered by the corella, the sulphur-crested and the red-tailed black cockatoos, not to mention the lorikeets. On this walk each morning I also encounter two large flies. They must be territorial as they are at the same two spots each day. They divebomb in and around my hair, so I now wear a hat!

At night we lie in bed and listen to the howling of the dingo family that live nearby. I swear they all begin on a different octave, and their harmonising leaves a lot to be desired. There are also a pair of barking owls; we laugh quietly as we get a high-pitched 'woof-woof' and the answering 'woof woof' in a lower key. They can carry on quite a conversation. The magpie geese sometimes fly over, honking to each other, and I wonder what they are doing flying at that time of night.

We are still stunned at the magnificent beauty that surrounds us here. On occasions, when driving in, we see the phenomenal sight of a huge red ball of the sun rising behind us and an equally huge golden ball of the moon setting in front. It never fails to move us. It is a place where spectacular star displays can be experienced as there are no artificial lights to detract from the splendour. The escarpment towering majestically above changes colour with the time of day. How fortunate we are.

HAPPY CAMPING

from material compiled by Natalie Wheeldon, Woolloongabba, Qld.

Camping has long been a favourite Australian holiday option and the Christmas period is the traditional time for many families to pack up the car and head for the hills, or the beach, or the outback. It's essential that all equipment be removed from storage, unpacked and checked very early in the planning stage. Many problems, even disasters, can be avoided by simple maintenance.

If tenting is your choice, it's a good idea to set it up in the backyard a week or two prior to departing to ensure all is in order – if it's not, you have time to fix it. At the same time, make sure all equipment is in running order, and repair or replace any that needs attention.

Accidents involving gas bottles are, unhappily, not infrequent, and are potentially disastrous. Gas cylinders have a ten-year life before retesting is necessary. There should be a date stamp on all bottles. If your cylinder is over ten years old, have it tested or replace it. Check all gas fittings and connections prior to use. Tighten all fittings securely, open the cylinder valve and rub soapy water around fittings. If any bubbles appear, turn the valve off and repair the leak. Leaking gas cylinders or appliances must *never* be used. Once satisfied that your gas equipment is safe, ensure you have enough gas in the cylinder to last the trip, or at least for the first leg of an extended holiday.

First-time campers should try to buy equipment that will last the family many years. Look for well-known brands from established companies that will be able to provide backup service and spare parts well into the future. Begin with the basics and add more sophisticated equipment to increase your camping comfort for subsequent holidays. A good starting kit includes:

- a good quality tent
- airbed or stretcher for each person
- sleeping bag for each person
- cups, plates, crockery
- food storage containers
- water storage containers
- cookware, stove, gas bottles
- chairs and table(s)
- first aid kit
- sunscreen, hats, insect repellent

If you are, or become, regular campers, equipment can be built up over time. Options include toilet, shower, extra tarps, fridge and freezer, camp cupboards. Much of this equipment can be obtained second-hand from happy campers who have moved on to another phase of their lives. Look in papers such as the *Trading Post*. Remember though, that you will be limited by the space you have available for transporting your equipment, and maybe even by the power of your vehicle to tow it.

When choosing a tent, consider the number of people it will need to accommodate, and whether or not you will want to stand up in it or just use it for sleeping. Purchase a tent made from good quality fabric with a waterproof coating. Think of the climate you will meet while travelling; during hot weather, for example, big windows and plenty of ventilation are essential.

Similarly, when buying a sleeping bag, look at the temperature rating on the label and select the right bag for the conditions. A bag with a hood is preferable when camping in cold areas.

For the stalwarts who enjoy camping in all areas and weather conditions, some extra wet-weather equipment is desirable. This might include a poly tarp, storm pegs, rain suit, water- and windproof matches, gas light, rain cowl and spacer. Sand pegs are available for beach campers. When camping in the bush you will need an axe, compass, whistle, and definitely plenty of water containers – always carry some with you when out walking.



HAPPY CAMPING HINTS

- Take lots of plastic bags for carrying wet towels and clothing or for keeping items such as toilet paper and clothing dry in damp weather.
- If you are really cold, line your sleeping bag with newspaper.
- Tell your neighbours, or a family member, exactly where you are going and when to expect you back.
- When intending to camp in a national park, check with the relevant authorities and obtain necessary permits.
- When camping in sandy locations, flatten aluminium drink cans and bury them in the sand to put your tent pegs through to hold them more securely.
- Find a forked stick to use for pouring hot water out of a billy can to avoid burnt hands.
- When collecting sticks for the evening fire, collect enough to start the morning fire also and store them out of the weather.

cont from page 11

We often have people, especially older Australians, who resent having to pay to come into the park, and others who are disappointed in what they see. That is sad, as they really haven't 'seen'. Recently a young man on a bike stopped here to fill up his water bottles. I asked him what he thought of the park; he had been in for a week and a half. He hesitated then said, 'I can't find the words to explain, but it's all in here,' and he touched his heart. That young man had 'experienced' Kakadu.

I don't know how long we'll stay here; one day we will move on, but Kakadu will never leave us – it is now part of us and we part of it.

Last we heard from Sue, she and Bruce were back in Victoria, considering their future direction.



WEEPING GRASS CREEK

by Anne Stelling, Wooragee, Vic.

John and I decided to build with straw bale for aesthetic and environmental reasons, as well as because of the fact that we could, even as inexperienced builders, do a lot of it ourselves. Our first contact with straw building was through a friend of John's, whose parents were using straw to build accommodation for their health farm in Western Australia. We were then inspired by the marvellous *Straw Bale House Book*, and began to make our plans.

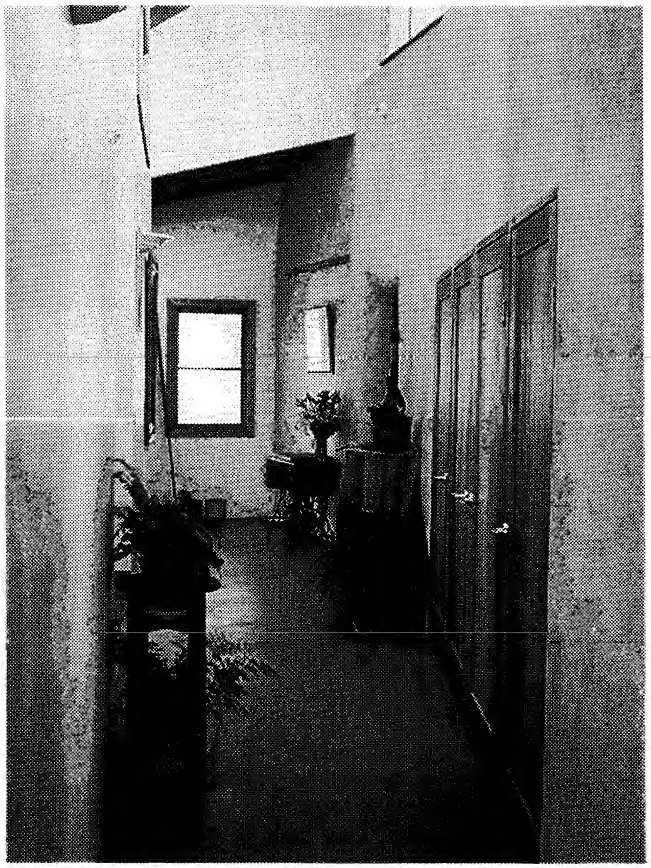
One of the best things we did at this stage was attend a straw bale building workshop with Don O'Connor and Sue Ewart in Daylesford. With hands-on experience we realised that we really could do a lot ourselves; that straw is very 'forgiving'; and that what you can do, you can fairly easily undo! We also picked up many practical ideas and were able to plan our own path, choosing from the many different ways of doing things those aspects which best suited the materials we would have to hand, and our experience.

While we had definite requirements of our house, we were unable to come to a design which used space efficiently and incorporated all the principles we wanted. What a frustrating experience it is to try to design a house when your best efforts, with scale ruler, pencil and paper, turn out to be decidedly lacking in perspective, totally unlike what was in your head, and somehow missing a kitchen! Eventually, we found a local architect who was very interested in 'alternative' houses, and especially keen to work in straw. He sat down with us to talk principles and about the 'feel' we wanted, and came up with the design we now live in. Despite the cost this added to the planning stage, we feel that the result is excellent and something we could not have imagined ourselves.

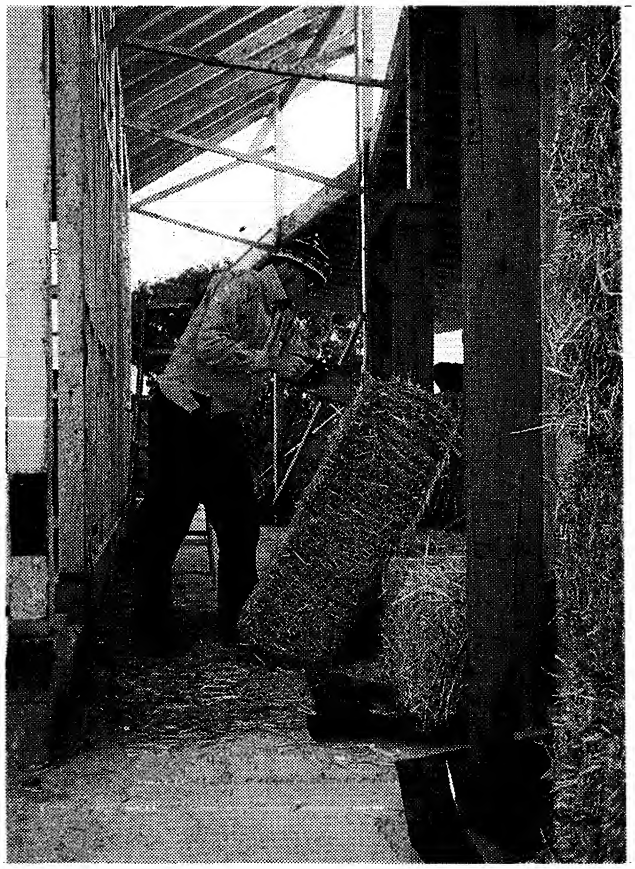
The house is both solar passive in design, featuring substantial north facing windows and a clerestory, and solar active in that our electricity is supplied entirely by a solar power system. We also use a solar hot water system which links in with the slow combustion stove in winter, providing plenty of hot water for all our needs, plus water to circulate through four hydronic heat banks throughout the house. The feel of the place is something particularly special to us, with curved and rounded walls giving an organic, cosy atmosphere.

Both house and shed are built on concrete slabs, with post and beam construction and straw bale infill – in other words, the posts support the roof, not the straw walls. The posts for the shed and part of the house are local bush poles, and the remaining posts in the house were salvaged from one of the old Mayday Hills mental institution buildings in Beechworth. We spent some quite miserable, cold and wet winter days there pulling out windows, timber, and even carpet underlay to use as mulch on our farm revegetation corridors.

The building process used about 900 straw bales – all local oaten straw. We were fortunate to find a very amenable supplier who allowed us to inspect the crop before baling to check that the straw was clean and bright, and who made the bales especially uniform and tight for us. He also supplied a quantity of half bales, which proved a great time saver in the bale-laying process.



The hallway, finished at last! The four doors on the right are for two storage cupboards and a drying cupboard which houses the hot water pipes and the flue from the combustion stove in the kitchen.



Friend Digby cuts into a bale to fit round a beam in the internal hall wall. The choice of building material allowed us, and friends, to do a lot of the work – straw is very forgiving.

The bale walls were constructed by friends, family and ourselves over a series of weekends. This process was relatively easy and an enjoyable group effort. We used available tools; a bale needle and a couple made specially of number 8 fencing wire, handsaws, a chainsaw and hedge trimmer. As each row went down, we drove in pins to secure the bales to those beneath – these we made from willow and bamboo, which were both locally available, and free!

At the workshop we attended, threaded steel rods were used to pin the bales and pull down the top plate on each wall. We were keen to try an approach with which we felt more comfortable, and which lessened the 'degree of difficulty' (in threading bales down over the rods) as the walls got higher. Before starting the walls, we Dynabolted small steel plates bent up at each end, with holes drilled to attach wire, to the cement slab. As each wall was completed, it was fitted with a top plate; fencing wire was passed from the floor, over the plate and down to the floor on the other side, then strained using ordinary fence strainers. This pulled the walls down about 15 centimetres – sometimes more – from the roof. We would then let the wall settle for a few days and strain it again, repeating the process until the wire remained tight. The gap under the roof was then filled in with 'pillows' of straw, which we made by rolling and tying the scrap wafers of straw left over from the wall building.

We sometimes had a dozen people working at once, some just there for a day and some who turned up weekend after weekend and became specialists in the various arts of straw baling. We soon had expert bale shorteners, bale layers, wall straighteners, gap fillers, pinners, and edge trimmers! By the time the last wall was up (which took about four attempts as we had left the most difficult till last!), many of the crew had moved on to netting the walls. This was nowhere near the fun of laying bales, involving lots of lost pliers and wire cutters, bleeding fingers and swearing. We covered all of the straw walls and the cement-sheeted walls in the front and back entry ways – a job which took easily three times the work of actually building the walls!

At this point winter set in, with wind and storms to make our hair stand on end. There was no way we could start the rendering, so to protect our hard work we had to cover all of the bale walls with black plastic. This, of course, was very difficult to keep on in high winds, and was regularly punctured by the wire. I thoroughly recommend timing your project so that the walls are up and rendered before winter!

Our walls were finally finished with 40 millimetres cement render inside and out, to which colour was added on the exterior. Although we originally planned to render it all ourselves, we soon realised that we could not possibly work and render, and move into our house within the millennium! We had some trouble finding someone to do the job and even considered spraying on

the render à la concrete tank style, but eventually linked up with the incredible Peter, Julie and Ross, who had the job done within a month. The difference between the straw walls, which we had covered in black plastic for the winter months, and the rendered finish is amazing, and we are glad to have incorporated a 'truth' window to remind us.

We tried to be as nontoxic as possible with our finishes, especially on the inside. All of the interior timber is finished with Bio Wood oil or varnish, from the exposed beams above to picture rails, door frames, doors and the recycled ash floor in the dining room. We even asked that the cabinet maker use Bio Varnish on our kitchen benches, which are beautiful red box slabs from a local tree. Despite his grave misgivings, about five coats, sprayed on, have given them a thick, hard finish which is standing up well to everyday wear and tear. This did take some experimentation though – it's quite a different job from using the usual two-pack epoxy, and he had trouble with insects and dust sticking to the slower-drying lacquer.

We also experimented with 'alys' paints on some of the interior stud/plaster walls, which I made from a recipe from *Gentle Earth Walking*. Alys, or alis, paint is made from kaolin clay, flour paste and water, mixed thoroughly and applied with a brush or roller. I made litres and litres of this in the blender (a very messy job) and added some tea tree oil to prevent it going off after the first batch developed a bit of a smell in the hot weather. You need to be careful when painting plaster because if you brush too much on the one spot you can start to wreck the plaster. Also it wets previous coats, so it's hard to tell how you are going until it has dried. It was quite successful, although requiring at least four coats to get a good coverage. I had finished the walls in the study and our bedroom, and had two coats on our long, high, hallway wall, when we discovered how impossible it was to clean – one good wipe with the dishcloth and you're back to plaster!

With the patter of little feet on the way by this stage, we thought it would be wiser (and quicker) to finish the wall with a more conventional finish, and did so with the then-new Berger Breathe Easy paint. It went on over the alys paint quite well, although would not stand repeated brushing without starting to remove it, and so far looks great.

We began building in late 1997, moved in in January 1999, and have now experienced the full seasonal range of our north-east Victorian climate. We are really pleased with the thermal properties of the straw walls and the heating power of north-facing windows, and have found the house to be comfortable in every season. Considering that we are still working towards interior window coverings, and have been through 45 degree days in February, and snow in winter, we are very happy with the way it all works!

We have had so much interest in the house and our farm activities that we are offering an experiential day tour for small groups, which takes in the house, bush regeneration and revegetation sites, and our farm forestry and fine wool enterprises. If anyone would like to join us for the tour, book with Anne or John on 03-5728-3302.

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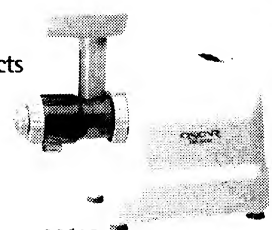
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MOUNTAIN-TOP CHRISTMAS





by Jose Robinson, Pomona, Qld.



Christmas in the year 2000 for our close family is set to be a little different from those of the past two decades.

Instead of the usual beach setting on Wild Cattle Island for the Robinson mob, the family will be coming up the mountain to us to celebrate the festive season in our newly completed home overlooking deep green valleys and mountain ranges. We are approximately 250 metres above sea level in the Noosa Hinterland on the Queensland Sunshine Coast.

Halfway through the new millennium year, we left behind us a way of life possibly envied by many. To us it began as a challenge at a certain period of our lives, when we felt the need to break away from the norm and take up a completely different lifestyle. We loved the life and we made a success of it, but now we've opted for a new challenge.

It was two weeks before Christmas in 1979 when we left behind most of the trappings of our 9 to 5 lifestyle and opted for a much simpler way of life on a small island. I can clearly call to mind that first Christmas with a much younger family and some very young grandchildren (others yet to be born).

I seem to recall we had about 30 for Christmas dinner that first year. Mostly family, but a few friends. It was a very casual affair with everyone contributing.

The midday festival meal was a buffet on the beach (there was no green lawn as yet). That night, some dossed down on mattresses on the floor to sleep. Others used a caravan which we (after much difficulty) managed to get across to the Island. Everyone contributed with good cheer, food and drinks and it was a Christmas to be remembered in that beautiful Island setting. Handmade paper caps and bonbons trimmed with sea shells were a fun thing.

Christmas presents for the adults had gone by the board several years earlier. There were simply too many of us. Our pleasure has always been watching the grandchildren as they excitedly opened their little gift-wrapped bundles that were placed under the tree on Christmas Eve.

Many of the 20 Christmasses spent on the Island were pretty much similar, with the family numbers fluctuating from year to year. Gradually we made things more comfortable with extensions to the house, then a flat built on to accommodate the enlarging families.

For the year 2000, those of the family who can make it will celebrate with us at our new mountain-top home. We still have a distant view of the sea from our eagle's nest new home, but it takes 30 minutes to drive there, and, once there, has to be shared with many other people – it's not the private beach we had become accustomed to.

Christmas dinner this year will be on the large front patio which opens onto a small pool. There will be some nostalgic thoughts in our minds of previous years when the ocean with all its fascinating moods was at our front door. The people are the same (if a little more mature, and for some, with a few more grey hairs). The main thing is, we will be together with good health and happiness abounding.

Over the years, we had to extend the size of our Christmas dinner table by adding trestle tables to accommodate everyone. Fashions change, people change, but the real meaning of Christmas never changes.

ASTHMA
Complementary Therapies

from Asthma Victoria.

This article is designed to inform people with asthma of the various complementary therapies that are available to them, as well as to highlight some of their associated risks. There are a wide range of treatments and therapies which claim to help asthma. Complementary therapies should be discussed with your doctor. Do not change your asthma treatment until your doctor advises you. Never use a complementary therapy in place of your asthma medication.

RESEARCH

Complementary medicines and therapies have not been studied as extensively as conventional medicines. This means that we do not know as much about how effective they might be and about all the possible harmful effects. Without published research it is difficult to say how helpful a particular complementary medicine or therapy is likely to be.

ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture is a method of treatment which involves the insertion of needles at specific parts of the body. The practice is based on Chinese theories of the body's natural balance of energies. Some studies have shown that acupuncture can be helpful for people with asthma in the short term. However, no long-term benefits have yet been shown. It has been suggested that acupuncture may be effective for people whose asthma is triggered by allergy, but less effective for those whose asthma is exercise induced. There are documented cases of people becoming very ill after acupuncture treatment. These cases are usually the result of infected needles or puncture injuries. Be sure that you attend an experienced acupuncturist who follows the necessary safety procedures.

CHIROPRACTIC

The chiropractic approach is to treat the thoracic spinal area, along with increased freedom of motion administered to the rib cage, with the aim of improving the function of the thoracic spine and ribs. Some limited research has shown that the uses of manipulation and mobilisation techniques positively affect the circulation of blood within the airway, lung capacity and the amount of oxygen reaching the blood. If joint and muscle stiffness are present, then in order to be able to restore your breathing to normal a chiropractor may need to free up the stiffness.

DIETS AND SUPPLEMENTS

A well-balanced diet is likely to be of benefit for all people. Some people argue, however, that asthma is caused by the inclusion or exclusion of certain foods in the diet. A few people have true allergies to certain foodstuffs (for example, shellfish or nuts). These foods need to be avoided. The benefits of avoiding certain foods, either to reduce symptoms or to prevent asthma early in life, are less clear. It may be best to avoid certain foodstuffs (for example, nuts) in pregnancy or in early childhood.

Some researchers have suggested that a high salt intake can increase the chance of having asthma symptoms, but further evidence is needed. Apart from this, there is no convincing evidence that children or adults who already have asthma, but no clear food allergy, will benefit from specialised diets which exclude specific foods.

Research into increasing vitamins (especially vitamin C and A), magnesium and fish oils (omega-3 fatty acids) have all shown benefits in some studies but no benefit in others.

HOMOEOPATHY

Homoeopathic treatments can vary, depending on the homoeopath's assessment of the patient's needs. One type of homoeopathy involves preparing a medicine which includes a very small amount of the trigger which the patient is allergic to (for example, pollen or house dust mites).

Research into a form of homoeopathy called 'homoeopathic immunotherapy' has shown some encouraging

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results in patients with asthma, rhinitis and hayfever. Homoeopathy may be helpful in asthma if the allergic trigger can be identified. This is not always easy as most people have more than one trigger.

HYPNOSIS

(hypnotherapy)

Hypnosis involves creating a state of decreased general awareness which enables the patient to concentrate exclusively on one thing or idea. Hypnosis has been shown to be beneficial in some cases, but it is also known that not everybody is able to be hypnotised. It is not certain why hypnosis seems to help certain people. Hypnosis and yoga may both have benefits for stress reduction, but it is not clear if they have other benefits as well.

NATUROPATHY AND HERBAL MEDICINE

Herbal medicine is one of the most diverse fields of complementary medicine, with a very long history and many different approaches originating in different countries. Despite this, there are few studies published in medical journals in the West showing benefits of using herbal medicines for asthma. Among the herbal medicines which have been suggested as potentially beneficial are *Coleus forskholii, Ginkgo biloba, Tylophora asthmatica* and *Saiboku-to*. Although these herbs have been suggested as worthy of further investigation, their effects are not fully understood and cannot be recommended without caution.

The ingredients contained in herbal medicines are not always clear. Therefore, you should seek your doctor's advice before trying a herbal medicine.

PHYSIOTHERAPY

Physiotherapists can assist with breathing control techniques when someone is distressed and can advise on asthma device techniques. A physiotherapist can help clear mucus from the lungs without making the asthma symptoms worse. Assistance with exercise programs can also be useful

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Simple relaxation techniques, which do not incorporate the philosophical aspects of yoga, have also been shown to have some benefit in asthma. It is uncertain whether yoga or breathing exercises help asthma by reducing stress (which can be a trigger) or by other physical effects.

ROYAL JELLY

Royal jelly and propolis (sometimes referred to as bee glue) are products produced from bees. There is evidence that taking royal jelly has caused very serious side effects in some people with asthma and other allergies. These have included asthma attacks, breathing difficulties, anaphylactic shock (a severe allergic reaction) and even death. The Therapeutic Goods Administration in Australia has issued a warning about the possible effects of royal jelly on people with asthma.

YOGA

Yoga is an ancient Hindu discipline which relates to the body, mind and emotions. It uses a variety of body positions and breathing techniques which can help to increase fitness and aid relaxation. One form of yoga, Pranayama exercises, has been studied with regard to asthma. In two studies, these exercises were found to be beneficial, with participants showing fewer asthma attacks and being less responsive to certain triggers.

IN CONCLUSION

No treatment – either complementary or orthodox – is entirely risk-free. When trying a complementary medicine always seek medical advice to ensure that there are no unforeseen side effects. Asthma Victoria has available specific fact sheets on royal jelly, asthma and allergy and the Butekyo breathing technique.

A brochure on food and asthma is available from Asthma Australia.

For further information contact your local doctor or call Asthma Victoria on 1800-645-130, or visit Asthma Victoria's website at: www.asthma.org.au

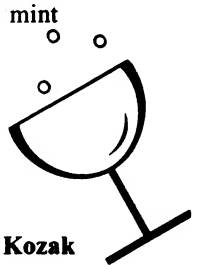


CHRISTMAS FRUIT PUNCH



500 g strawberries, pureed and frozen into ice block trays
6 apples, peeled and cored
lemon juice
raspberries, black currants, diced canteloupe, any other fruit of choice
1 lt orange juice
500 ml pineapple juice
500 ml apple juice
1 bottle ginger beer
1 bottle mineral water
vodka or green ginger wine, optional

Cut triangle wedges lengthways from the outside edges of the apples to form star shapes when they are sliced horizontally. Place apple stars into a large bowl, cover with lemon juice to prevent browning. Add other fruits. Pour in juices and leave till just prior to serving. Add strawberry ice blocks, ginger beer and mineral water. Borage flowers and sprigs of mint can be floated on top for decoration.



For adults, add preferred alcohol. For infants, strain out fruit pieces before serving.

Heather Kozak

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BEAUTIFULLY BOXED

by Jennifer McLeod, Sebastopol, Vic.



Any gift can be enhanced by the way it is presented. You could go for the minimalist wrapped-in-old-newspaper look (Believe me, there are people who can make this look the height of chic!), the practical rolled-in-a-tea-towel method, the expensive commercial option, or any of myriad creative ideas. The make-your-own box alternative is not a new one, it keeps resurfacing, enjoying waves of popularity among the crafty and nimble-fingered fraternity. One reason for the enduring popularity of homemade boxes is the great satisfaction of creating something useful and attractive from preused materials. They can be stunningly plain (an unadorned black or white cardboard for example), or as decorative as your imagination and your time allow.

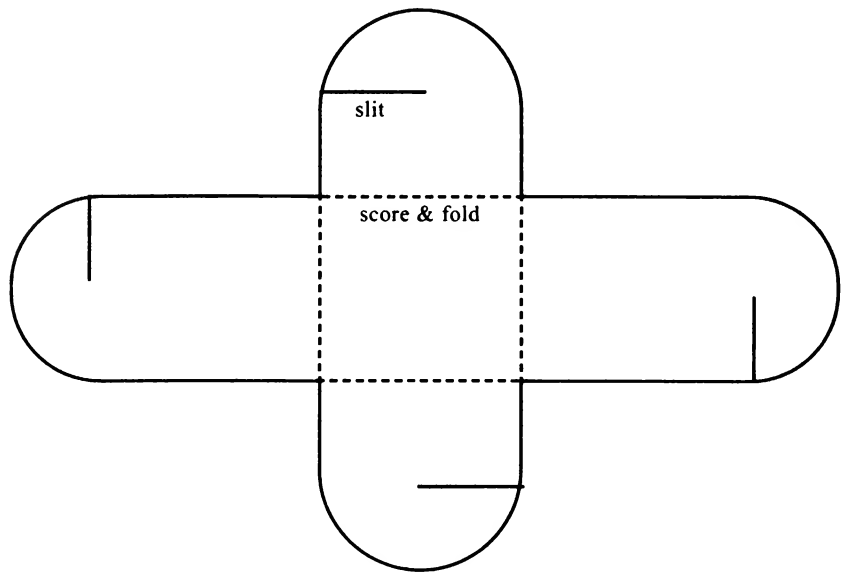
If you make your own paper, produce it a little thicker and use it for the boxes. Often offcuts of a suitable size can be obtained from printers. Old manila folders, used greeting cards, some calendars, posters that use a heavy paper, sculpture paper, drawing paper are all suitable.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

- card
- scalpel, Stanley or craft knife
- ruler
- pencil
- cutting board
- pointy scissors (to score card)
- glue
- pictures, dried flowers, paint, or other decoration

Chocolate Box

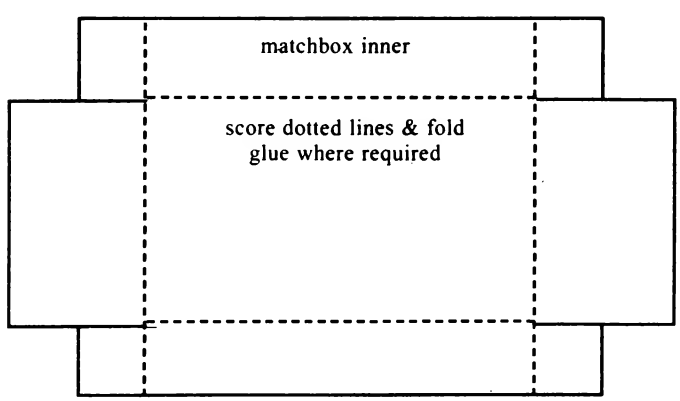
This easily made box can be constructed from a greeting card. The idea is to put a chocolate, or maybe a homemade treat, in the centre and put one at each diner's place at the table. It could also be used to hold party favours for children.

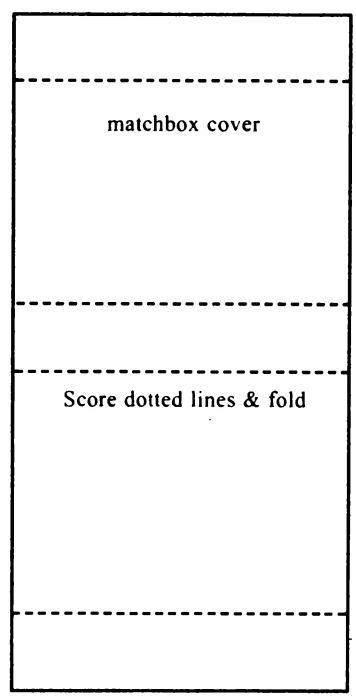


PATTERNS

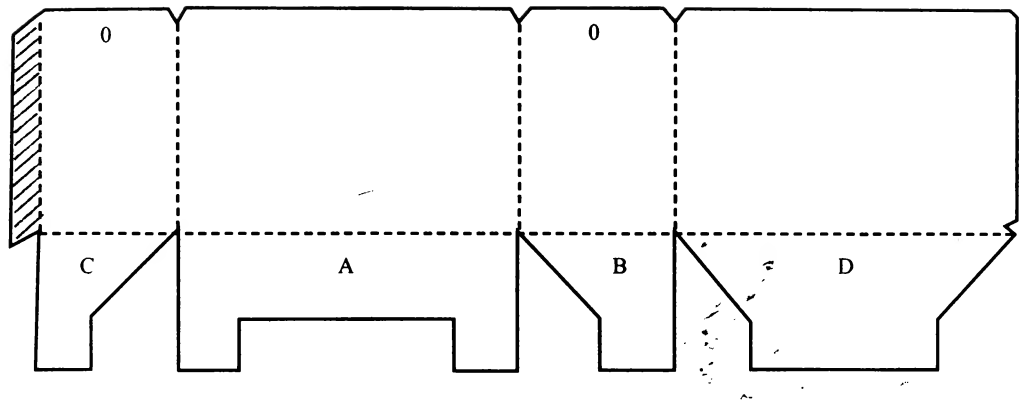
Matchbox

Make a small container for a piece of jewellery, a gemstone, or other precious gift.





Mini Basket or Bag





Mini Baskets or Bag

This has been adapted from a Malinda Johnston pattern, as found in her book *Boxes & Bags*. It can be enlarged as desired. Trace and cut out pattern. Make a handle to desired length from card, cord, ribbon, string. Glue or punch holes and thread through. Score and fold on dotted lines. Assemble by glueing shaded section inside box. Next fold in flap A, then B and C, and lastly slip D under A.

Rectangular Box

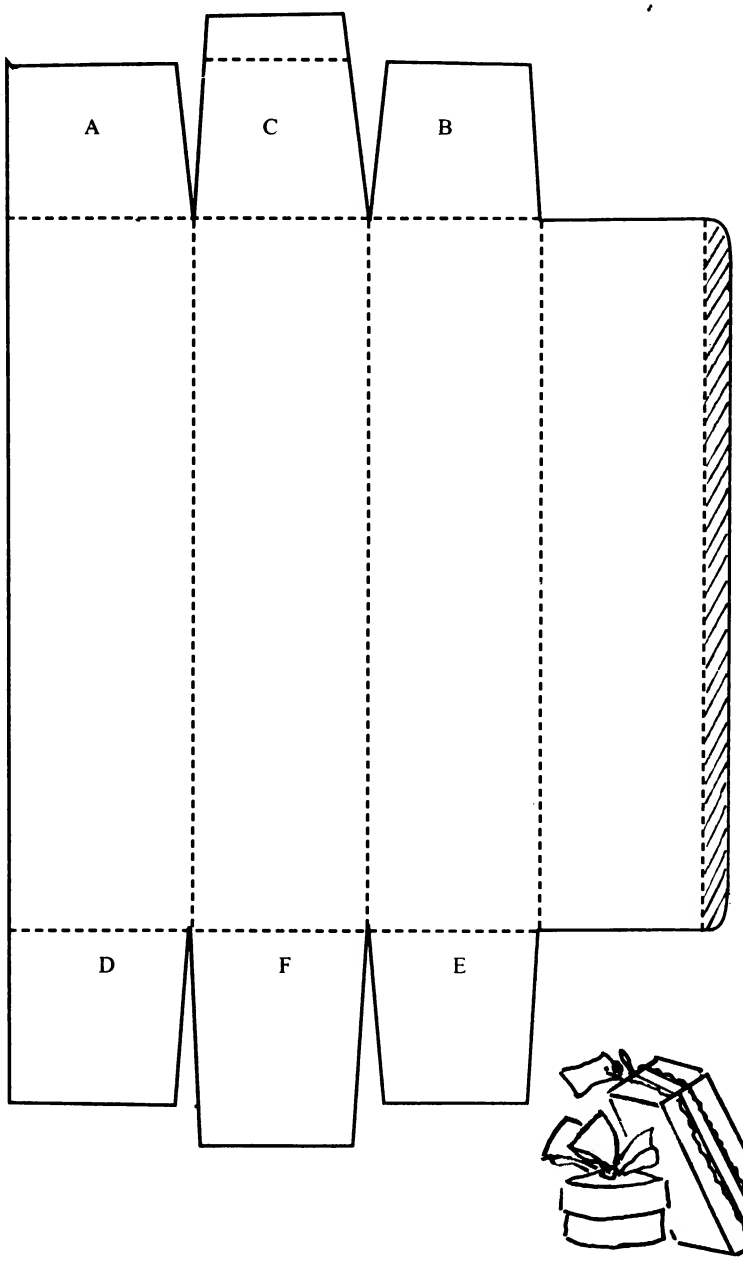
(based on toothpaste box)

Score and fold along dotted lines. Glue A to B; D to E. Fold C over A/B and glue. Fold F over D/E and glue. Flap tucks into box which may be secured with ribbon, string or raffia.

The box can be shortened or lengthened as desired, or made deeper and wider by adding to each section by the same amount in each piece.

Rectangular Box





DECORATION

Boxes made from calendars, greeting cards, or homemade paper will probably need no further decoration; maybe a bow or dried flower as a finishing touch. If further decoration is required, go to town with paints, collage, decoupage, or whatever your imagination inspires you to, to create a unique work of art that will be valued as much as the gift itself. For a simple but distinctive effect, try antiqueing.

Antiqueing

Start with your plain box. You will then need:

- PVA glue
- ½ to 1 cm stiff brush
- facial tissues
- folk art acrylic paints, or similar, in base colour
- gold or silver paint for highlighting

• hairdryer for speed of drying
• water
• container to mix glue and water

Tear tissues into pieces about 50 mm in size; it doesn't matter if they are irregular in shape or a little larger or smaller. Mix PVA and water, half and half. Paint small section of box with glue mix, place piece of tissue on wet area and push with brush to form wrinkles. Cover box in like manner overlapping tissue pieces.

When box is covered, dry in sun or use hairdryer to speed the drying. When dry, paint with base colour. Dry thoroughly. To highlight ridges/wrinkles use a minute amount of gold, silver, copper on an almost-dry brush and draw lightly across tops of ridges.

For other gift boxes see GRs 132 & 123, and for hat boxes see GR110.

PAPER AND ENERGY

It takes around ten times more energy to manufacture a piece of paper than to copy an image on it. Make sure high-speed copiers are set to automatically make double-sided copies. This reduces paper costs and saves energy.

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DILL

A MOTHER'S BLESSING

by Liz Sinnamon, Nambour, Qld.

An annual native to the Mediterranean countries and Russia, dill (*Anethum graveolens*) has plumes of finely cut blue-green leaves and umbels of yellow flowers in flattish heads in mid-summer. It grows to about 90 centimetres in height.

GROWING

Sow seeds in a sunny spot, then thin seedlings to about 20 centimetres apart. They resent being transplanted and show their displeasure by bolting into flower prematurely. Sow in spring, as soon as the ground is warm, and follow with small sowings at fortnightly intervals throughout the summer to ensure a good supply of fresh leaves. Where winters are mild, seed can be sown in the autumn to over-winter and provide a good crop the following spring, or self-sown seedlings will over-winter. Never sow near fennel, as the two will cross-pollinate and subsequent plants will probably not have the desired flavour or quality.

The filmy foliage may be cut about six weeks after sowing. The seed is collected when fully ripe and dry. As the hollow stalks, when top-heavy with flowers, can easily be knocked over by the wind, it is advisable to find a sheltered spot for growing dill.

MEDICINAL PROPERTIES

Dill is galoctopoietic, stimulating the glands and encouraging the secretion of milk, making it a great benefit to nursing mothers. For infants it is used as an infusion or syrup to soothe colic, griping pains and insomnia.

For adults, the plant lowers blood sugar levels, and can be used freely by diabetics. It is also suitable for low-salt diets.

Dill essential oil is similar in odour to caraway, and is almost identical in composition, consisting almost entirely of lemonene and carvone, but with dill containing less of the latter.

To make a syrup for babies or adults, bruise a cup of fresh dill leaves, add these to 500 millilitres of water, and simmer until the water is reduced by half. Let this stand until cold, then strain through fine cheesecloth or a strainer. Do not push through but allow the liquid to run through at its own speed. Add to this 500 grams of sugar and cook until the mixture becomes a syrup, skimming frequently while boiling. Strain again while hot. This mixture can be given by the teaspoon.

To prepare as a tea, simply steep a cupful of fresh leaves in 500 millilitres of boiling water, sweeten with sugar if required.

CULINARY USE

The fresh leaves, cooked with cabbage, cauliflower, or Brussels sprouts, will eradicate the unpleasant smells that arise during the cooking of these vegetables.

To make dill vinegar, bruise two cupfuls of leaves, add a litre of white wine vinegar, pour into a glass jar or crock and let stand for ten days in a warm spot, stirring daily.

Chopped dill leaves are delicious on potatoes baked in their jackets. They can be used with beef, chicken, duck, fish, lamb, pork and veal, and in casseroles and sauces. Sprinkle into omelettes or cook with rice or in breads.



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A FAMILY CHRISTMAS

by Karen Long, Miles, Qld.

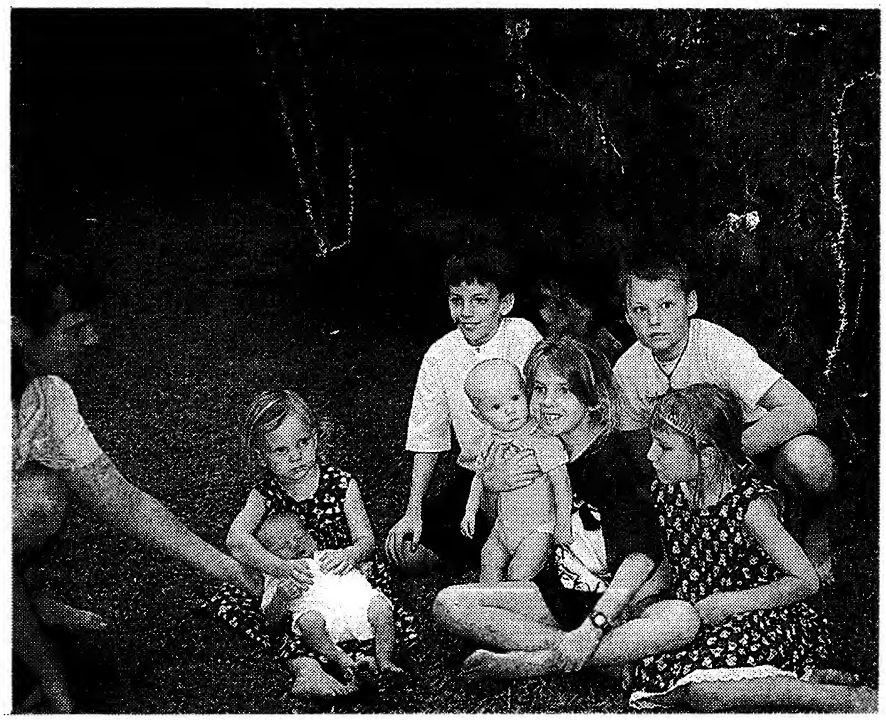
About two years ago I wrote an article in GR 130 about our outback Christmas. Since our move in January 1999 to Miles much has changed, including how we spent our first Christmas here. Life in Miles is hectic, with me teaching full time and my husband working at the local abattoir. The kids have access to more activities and sports and have made new friends. It also means that we are closer to relatives, some of whom live in Brisbane.

Christmas 1999 was celebrated as a family Christmas at my parent's place in Brisbane. This may not be unusual for some families, but because our family is scattered all over Queensland (it was all over Australia once!) it was an important occasion for us. No one can remember the last time the whole family had Christmas together, it was that long ago! When I say 'the whole family', that is my parents, their four children and husbands/wives and their children, my father's sister and husband, daughter and husband, and my grandmother. Four generations of the family.

The lead up to Christmas was somewhat different to Christmasses spent in Yaraka. There was no Christmas Tree celebration, but there was a Mardi Gras and carol singing in the main street in Miles. We still had the school concert and the breakup party on the last day of school. This seems to be a tradition at most schools.

We were able to travel to Brisbane on Christmas Eve and travel home a few days later last year. When living at Yaraka a visit to relatives was a 1½ day drive north or south, depending who we visited. Now it doesn't depend on the weather as to whether we can visit anyone as we don't have dirt roads to contend with anymore.

Christmas Day with my family is a well coordinated event. Once everyone has arrived and all the gifts are under the tree (a hoop pine), my father dons a Christmas cap and hands out the gifts to everyone. With 7 children and 14 adults in the group there is wrapping paper everywhere! Then a bit of skill is needed to remember who gave who which gift so that they can all be thanked, and all the gifts packed away with their correct owners. The cards are collected and any reusable wrapping paper is put away for the following year. Lunch is served next.



Christmas '99 in Brisbane was a memorable family event for the Long clan.

This is always a cold affair as Christmas Day in Brisbane is usually hot and humid. Everyone is organised to bring some part of the lunch. There is ham, chicken, a variety of salads, and plum pudding for dessert. Everyone pulls their bonbons, puts on their party hats and reads all the jokes. After lunch an afternoon snooze is the order of the day. When the kids get a bit restless they play cricket or handball on the driveway and feed the ducks and geese. Last year they also had a few water fights with water cannons and decided to wash the cars with them. Tea consists of the leftovers from lunch (if you can fit any in!). Then everyone loads their cars with goodies and heads for home after a lovely family day.

CHRISTMAS HEALING HOLLY

Holly is said to have healing properties. Its presence in your house is said to ward off asthma, dropsy, gout, rheumatism and the measles, and if you put a sprig of it on your front door it is meant to protect your home from thunder, lightning, fire and the evil eye.

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INVALUABLE GARDENING EXPERIENCE

by Maureen Barton, Manjimup, WA.

***Grass Roots* readers frequently amaze us with their ingenious solutions to some of the challenges of life on the land. Two perennial problems are how to keep birds from devouring our fruit crops, and how to most efficiently use precious water resources. Maureen Barton's resourceful methods of alleviating these predicaments just might inspire others.**

BIRD NETTING

When I shifted to this property sixteen years ago, the first thing I planted was the fruit trees. They took a while to get through the gravel, rock and clay, but then they took off. So did the parrots from the nearby bush. They ate everything. I bought a couple of throw-over nets, which weren't much use, as the birds sat on the trees and ate the fruit they could reach through the net. I found, too, that the nets, of a hard plastic, only lasted a couple of years before becoming brittle.

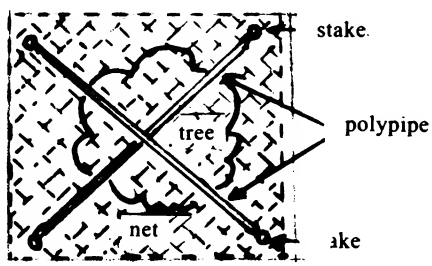
I saw advertised in GR a system for completely covering a fruit tree. My family rallied round and gave me one for a combined Christmas and birthday gift. When the apparatus came it consisted of: four tomato stakes; lengths of polypipe which fitted onto the stakes; a square of knitted mesh, three metres a side; a length of knitted mesh, 1.5 metres by 12 metres.

The stakes went in to form a square of three metres around the tree. The polypipe, pushed down onto the stakes, formed a cross above the tree. The three-metre square went over the polypipe and the long bit went round the outside.

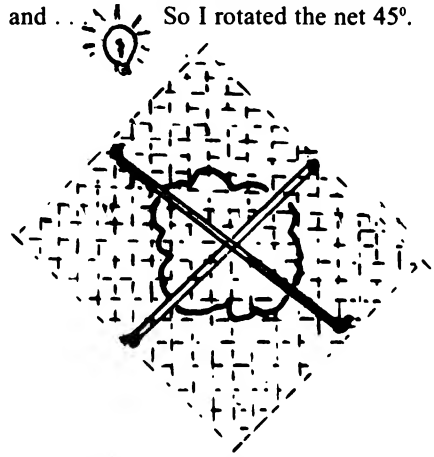
Great! The tree was covered. But the number of clips provided was inadequate to hold the net together, so out with the trusty binder twine. I used binder twine, too, to anchor the bottom of the net to lengths of timber, to stop the birds getting underneath. But hey, who's complaining? I had fruit from one tree!

The next year I went out to cover the tree again. Hammered in the stakes with difficulty – I'm a small woman. With much effort I got the polypipe onto the stakes. Much work up and down the ladder and back and forth got the net square over the top. I was exhausted by this time. Finish it tomorrow.

The arrangement at that stage looked (from above) like this:



The next day I went out to continue, and . . . So I rotated the net 45°.



then drew the four points into the trunk of the tree and fastened them there. With that useful binder twine I did a sort of finger chainstitch to join the open sides so the tree was completely enclosed, and I could still cultivate underneath it. Furthermore, by cutting in half the long section now left over and finger-stitching it together, I covered another tree.

This finger-chain is quick to do, and easily undone – just pull. As I could afford it, I bought more net and polypipe, and I now have eight trees covered.

The netting lasts very well. I am still using the first lot. It comes in what is said to stretch to ten metres wide, so in theory, buying five metres will cover two trees. The first year it is far too springy to stretch that far, so for the first year I drape the whole lot over a tree and let it stretch. The second year ne should have two five-metre squares, but I didn't. I eventually realised that the net is like a trellis: stretch it one way and it shortens the other way. So I suggest buying six metres of net. You also need four tomato stakes and two six-metre lengths of polypipe to fit over the stakes. You will need to rasp the edges off the stakes for about 30 centimetres down. I keep my fruit trees pruned so that they will fit under the net. Now I have plenty of fruit to bottle, jam, dry, eat and share.

WATERING

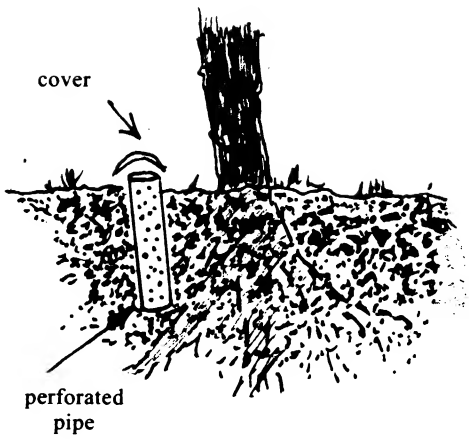
Watering was a problem. My block slopes and I used to dig a half-moon trench on the downhill side of each tree, so that when I left the hose trickling the water didn't just run away. But a couple of years ago I had a bad fall climbing through a fence, got my leg caught up in the ringlock, and wrecked my knee. No digging for me. Poor trees.

Much thought produced a marvellous idea. I bought some 10-centimetre perforated pipe. My visiting son with the posthole digger dug a hole about 40 centimetres deep next to each tree. The perforated pipe was cut into 40-centimetre lengths, and inserted in the hole, and the earth packed around it. A cheap soup dish from the supermarket covered each hole to reduce evaporation.

each tree. The perforated pipe was cut into 40-centimetre lengths, and inserted in the hole, and the earth packed around it. A cheap soup dish from the supermarket covered each hole to reduce evaporation.

So now I put the hose from the dam tank running into the pipe, and the water is taken down into the ground. For trees which can't be reached by the hose, I pour a bucket of water in.

On wash days all the water goes on the trees, and for this I have an easy device. Many years ago I found a pram at the dump. The vinyl was grotty, so I removed it and left it there. The frame of the pram has been as handy as a pocket in a shirt. I can stand a box in it to transport all sorts of things, and to collect kindling from along the road.



Another gem from the dump was an urn. One handle missing, no lid, but it was watertight and the tap worked. So on wash days I stand the urn in the pram frame, add two buckets of rinsing water, wheel the pram up to a tree and turn on the tap. It's a cinch! By the time I'm ready with another two buckets, the water has run into the vertical perforated pipe, and it's also time to shift the dam hose. It takes me two or three hours to do the washing, but then I have also watered 20 trees.

BATHROOM CLEANER

To clean and disinfect bathrooms, use this lavender cleaning paste. Place 2 tablespoons of dried or fresh lavender buds in an enamel saucepan, add 300 ml water, simmer for 30 minutes. Strain through a muslin cloth, squeezing well. Blend 2 parts of the herbal liquid with 1 part of white vinegar. Add 1 cup of pure soap flakes to a pan with a small amount of the herbal vinegar liquid, enough to cover the flakes. Melt over medium heat, stirring constantly. Add 75 g calcium carbonate (from chemist) and enough of the herbal liquid to make a soft, thick paste. Store in a wide lidded jar. Apply with a cloth, then rinse off. A few drops of lavender oil added to the rinse water in the washing machine gives clothes a lovely fresh fragrance.

Jenny Morcombe, Scaddan, WA.

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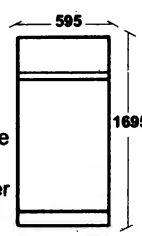
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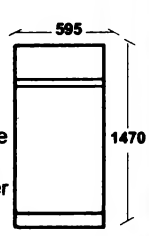
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SOLAR – MY WAY

by Les Lolli, Bauple, Qld.

With no electricity in the area ten years ago, I decided to go solar. There was some kind of a nightmare rebate scheme so I said no thank you.

Low-voltage systems didn't require a tradesperson to connect (Qld). I'm an expert at frying electrical goods, so I compensated by placing a fuse with each appliance and I blew some. I chose a 12 volt system and a combination of generator/gas for fridge and stove.

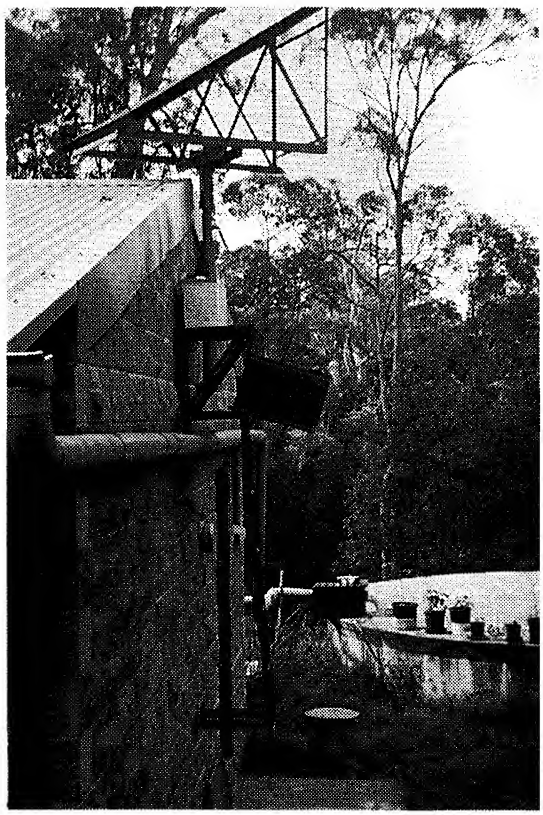
I made a harness of six metres of battery cable (+ and –) and ran 8 mm wire off that cable to each appliance: 7 lights, TV and two 12 volt power points. The wiring is excessive, but I reduce voltage efficiency loss by half a volt at those distances. This system is connected to 2 x 200 amp six volt batteries in series. Powered by three Solarex MSX-60 solar panels, this is a one-person system and easily added to. I put in ceiling switches to cut down wire length and voltage efficiency loss. The batteries were placed outside on the gable at ceiling level, for the same reason. The panel's stand moves through 200 degrees to follow the sun manually if required (see photo).

The range of gas fridges available surprises most people. The 2.5 KVA generator sits anyhow, so is used for 240V needs: laundry, tools etc. The generator is easily carted around my 2½ acre block for my 240V electric chainsaw.

Not a tradesperson, I designed and installed my own system. A quote for a larger system was to be $55,000. I wasn't supposed to touch it. If anyone is an expert and can't explain to me in simple lay language I don't want to hear that I can't tinker with my gadgets. Anyone thinking of doing their own solar system should consider adding 12 percent to estimated consumption due to wiring efficiency loss.

COSTS

2 x 6V deep cycle batteries = $360
3 x MSX Solarex panels = $1500
regulator (must) = $120
7 lights @ $55 = $385
7 ceiling switches = $70
30 m - 240V from generator shed to house (underground), safety switch, 2 power points (240V) in house by a tradesperson = $515
2.5 KVA generator = $800
gas fridge, used = $1200
I used gas stove and instant water heater. Gas line from shed underground to house, connected by a tradesperson = $950
panels mount, scrap steel and aluminium = $100
total = $6000



Above: Les's solar panels and stand, with two storage batteries.



Left: Les at work on the roof of his owner-built home.

By appointment only, 07-4129-2443, my system is available for viewing.

ARTHRITIS REMEDIES
THE GOOD OIL

by Helen Bell, Gymea, NSW.

Herbs, massage and compresses were the main ways to relieve arthritis in the days before pills and physiotherapy. Today they can still be used to give much relief. I've used the following remedies on knees, hands and ankles over my lifetime and they may help ease rheumatism, osteo and rheumatoid arthritis.

The humble cabbage can be chopped finely and crushed or bruised with the bottom of a glass. Pack onto the joint and cover with gauze or an old, clean strip of sheeting and bandage the area firmly. Leave on overnight. Can be repeated as often as needed.

Arnica is anti-inflammatory and readily available in salve form from health food stores. It is used when the joint is hot and swollen, although persistent massage can drive its influence deeply inside the body. Ten parts of arnica tincture to 80 parts hot water can be used to soak the hand or joint for 15 minutes. Or alternatively, soak a pad and apply to the affected part. It can be repeated four-hourly. When pain is reduced, combine arnica with witch hazel and use as a compress. Arnica should not be used on open wounds.

To make a turnip compress, take a fresh tuber and grate it. Pack around the joint, as for cabbage. Best on swollen areas and unbroken skin. Keep warm, preferably overnight. Very good for soft tissue sports injuries.

Tiger Balm is a commercially prepared salve made from camphor, cajeput, mint, cassia and clove bud oils. It will raise the heat of the area and maintain that heat for long periods when covered. Effective when used prior to going outdoors in winter. My personal experience found it more effective for rheumatics although it can comfort old joint injuries.

Nothing in the medicine cabinet? Sister Kenny, our famous outback nurse, pioneered this simple hot and cold pack treatment. In a warm, draught-free room, put a clean gauze pad in a bowl of hot water and another in a bowl of cold water. Apply the hot pad first, then the cold for a few consecutive minutes, ending with the hot compress. Dry the area and cover it with flannel or wool.

Raw linseed oil with 10 drops of wintergreen oil added is a very natural remedy for joint pains.

There's been some controversy over the use of comfrey, so I would recommend external application only for a month then a break for a month. Use fresh young leaves with the medial rib removed. Bruise these leaves and pack them around the joint, holding them in place with a whole leaf and dry bandage. Apply for 10 – 20 minutes. Older leaves can bring skin reactions; remove immediately you notice any reaction.

A honey and comfrey ointment recipe is attributed to Dr Vogel. Boil several comfrey leaves in pure water to produce a dark green tincture. Add 1 – 4 teaspoons honey. Mix thoroughly in a cup and heat in a saucepan of water. Fold a clean cloth pad, soak it in the hot liquid and apply it to the sore joint. Keep it warm overnight with a bag of hot hay flowers, hot chamomile flowers, or heated cherry stones. Wrap a thick cloth around everything. Repeat for several weeks.

To make a herbal rub, mix two parts thyme oil, two parts rosemary oil, two parts juniper oil with eight parts almond oil. Rub into joints morning and night. Almond oil is expensive and can be produced at home by adding 6 – 10 drops of almond essential oil to approximately 60 ml of a light carrier oil such as macadamia. I have also used extra virgin olive oil as a carrier, but it is slightly greasy on the skin.

Finally, don't forget to reduce the acid level in the body by taking two teaspoons of apple cider vinegar in fruit juice or hot water every day!

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In Memory of Miss Clucky

by E & Co, Ravenshoe, Qld.

Many GR readers write of their delight in discovering the joys of feathered companions. Some inherit a few fowls when they move into their new abode, others receive the dubious gift of a rooster with a couple of worn-out girlfriends. More will be cajoled into ownership by the bundle of fluff that their children plead loudly to keep while blocking the alley in a crowded market. For me, the love affair began when I was just a toddler and someone gave my parents a handful of chicks. However, it would be some three decades later before I would once again sit with chicks at my feet.

One of the reasons that we had moved out of country suburbia was the proximity of the neighbour's bantam roosters. The fallacy that cocks only crow at dawn was exploded over several years of torment. (Who started that myth anyway?) So, I had vowed never to own a rooster, but I was going to have my hens. There was so much to learn with our transfer to rural living that we gave up trying to cover eventualities and just took the plunge. We landed in at the deep end, but a few months later I got my chooks.

It was a race against time to finish building the henhouse. I had pored over back copies of GR and dug out as many books as possible on the architecture of such structures. With our house block being a narrow strip on the side of a hill, there wasn't a lot of choice as to location. Digging out the hill behind the house to provide proper drainage and a retaining wall gave us barrowloads of fill to expand the proposed site. We salvaged some old sheets of iron (with the owner's permission) from a neighbouring property, used treated pine posts and some scrap timber to build a very secure chooky mansion. Despite working as fast as possible, we realised that we had run out of time if we were to make the rendezvous with the chook man.

It is often written that a journey may be 'laced with anticipation' – ours certainly was! The bump-down gate at



the entrance to the poultry farm was our first experience with such a contraption. Gently nudging the gate we watched it disappear below the bonnet and slowly inched our way over it, half-expecting a tyre to blow out any second. That drama over, we drove up to the farm and into the lives of a dozen distressed 'ladies' whose useful lives had been declared to be over. The old farmer carried out several hens by their legs and handed a bundle of squawking indignant bloomer-showing girls to me. I'd never held a live chook in my life, much less a bundle of chicken legs with flapping birds at the end of them! No time to be backward, I watched in amazement as all twelve of the birds disappeared into just two of the many cardboard boxes we had brought with us. A head popped out here and there, but the farmer poked it back and firmly taped up the box.

The drive home was an anxious one as we worried that the birds would die of suffocation. Since the chooky mansion was incomplete, we found a giant cardboard box to house them in that night. All through the night I lay listening to the scratching and shuffling as our new guests tried to get over their ordeal. Once the door was on their mansion, we carried them (upright this time) one by one to their new home. Some were interested in the process, others trembled and fretted about their future. After the final journey we discovered two eggs as payment for their motel room. It was a highly exciting affair!

Over time differing personalities emerged from our flock and each bird received an appropriate name. Miss Chatty was the first of the brood to die. It was heart wrenching to bury the little black body and wonder what I had done wrong (or not done at all). I continued to learn and to count eggs on my chart and loved to sit and watch the gang at 'break-out' time when they would scramble up to the orchard and create havoc with the driplines. I pretended to be harassed and disgruntled as they found their feathered way into the garden to scoot holes and munch new shoots. We took pity on the smallness of their front yard and added a daytime run. This area doubled in size as the girls demanded more territory. It doesn't matter how much room you give them, they still love getting out. There is a permanent bulge in the wire fence where the afternoon watch has stuck her chest out – all the better to catch sight of the opening back door.

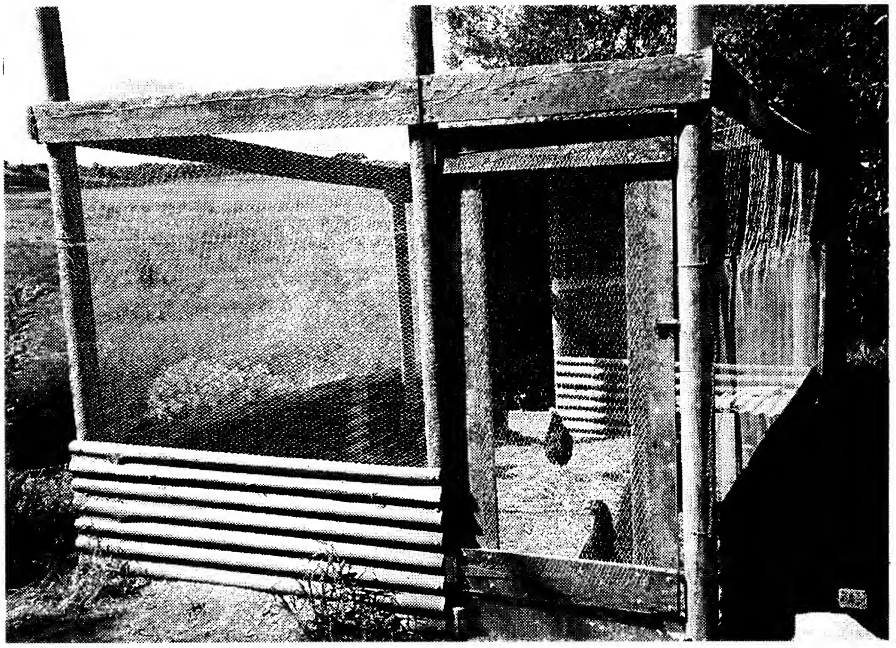
We had been told that Australorp-cross hens are not inclined to go broody. Miss Clucky proved to be the exception to the rule. The first time she went broody I tried everything to put her off, short of caging her and hanging the cage from the clothesline – as one suggestion proffered. The other girls were not happy about having to queue up for their favourite nest box. A neighbour suggested giving me some fertile eggs the next time it occurred. Fee Fee beat Miss Clucky to the punch and proved to be a very temperamental mother. When it came to feeding time she would take one peck in the seed bin then walk a half-circle backwards before settling in to her feed. When the eggs hatched, Fee Fee was very protective and disinclined for the constant

gawping of an excited 'grandmother'!

When it was Miss Clucky's turn, she revelled in the luxury of sitting comfortably in the nest all day. Come her break time I often worried that she was leaving the eggs for too long, but she knew how to time it and would dash back at the right moment. A contented mother, she let the chicks pull her wattles and scramble all over her. Ever enthusiastic about feeding them I began to wonder if she was eating for herself. One day I went down to the yard to see Miss Clucky jump out of the nursery enclosure and head for home. Sure enough, she had decided that it was time for the babies to fend for themselves and ignored them from that day. Unfortunately, despite the healthy progress of our chicks, they all proved to be roosters. Thus ended any more attempts at chick raising.

The most noisy and boisterous of the gang, Miss Clucky was ever at the fore of any excitement. She and her cohort, Miss Brr, would roam far and wide, teaching any new birds all the old tricks. On the odd occasion that we would forget to lock them up for the night, it would be Miss Clucky who would walk around the house at dawn, calling to us for an early breakfast. It would be Miss Clucky who would start the afternoon call to let us know it was time to get out. One day Miss Clucky was standing at the edge of the verandah making strange noises; when I went to investigate I discovered a snake on the retaining wall. I told her not to go near it. 'Not me,' she said, 'I was just telling you about it,' and off she waltzed.

Many was the time when, passing the back door, we would catch Miss Clucky peering in or sitting comfortably on the mat with total disdain for the bugs chewing through the garden. I would be taking a nap after work and be woken by the incessant calling of Miss Clucky who had jumped up on the table to peer in at my window. Always demanding attention, always wanting extra snacks. She would stand at the tailgate of the ute where we would often prepare bread snacks for the cows, and want to know why there were no crumbs. She became the building inspector when we erected the garage, questioning loudly why we had omitted a seed bin. She put her stamp of approval on the new cement path and made sure that we had installed the shower base in the guest room properly.



No matter how secure or spacious the enclosure, hens will always want to get out and scratch far and wide.

Time and again, after laying a few eggs, she would go broody. Sometimes she would get so thin I would worry and try to snap her out of it. It didn't matter how many times we would throw her out of the nest or bar her way from getting back in. Not even the juiciest of morsels at her beak would move her. The eggs began to decrease as the years went by, but Miss Clucky remained healthy and vocal. She and Miss Brr became the only two birds left out of my original family. I hated to think what I would do without them. Just before Christmas we lost Muffy, one the newer crew. Worried about the circumstances of her demise I watched the rest of the gang closely. Alas, not closely enough, for by the time Miss Clucky was obviously sick some two months later it was too late. She gathered enough strength to get up out of her sick box and find her way home to die with her mates. After five years of her regal presence, we miss Miss Clucky. Miss Brr stands forlornly by a gumboot for company. Tuffy, another of the new crowd, is making her mark in the quest for attention, but there will never be another Clucky.

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CHRISTMAS ANGEL

by Valda Martin, Ruffy, Vic.



These angels are quite easy to make and I give them to adults and children; both love them. An angel could be suspended by a loop and hung on your Christmas tree. To save time I make about six at once.

MATERIALS

- pretty Christmas fabric 50 x 20 cm for the dress
- the same amount in calico for the body, arms and legs
- some filling
- 6 mm elastic
- approximately 60 x 8 cm ribbon for bow (can be wire edged)
- doll's hair or dyed mohair
- very thin ribbon to tie off feet

METHOD

Body Arms & Legs

Make a template of each from the diagrams. With two layers of calico together, draw around the templates, allowing seam allowances between. Sew on this line. Then, leaving 6 mm seam allowance, cut out. It will always be easier if you sew before cutting out. Leave the tops of the arms and legs open for turning through and leave the bottom of the body open.

When the legs are turned right side out, fill the foot area and run a gathering stitch around the ankle. Tie some narrow ribbon around the ankles. When the arms are turned, tie a knot in them for wrists. Before turning the body, clip in at the shoulder curves, turn and fill head very firmly and then fill body. Pin legs in place where indicated and firmly hand-sew in place, then sew bottom closed.

Dress

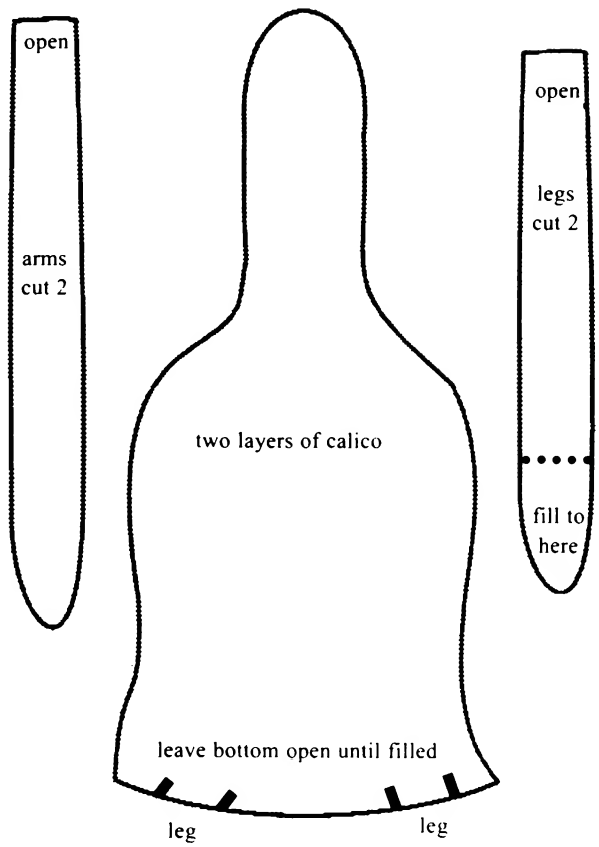
Make a narrow hem across the length of the fabric. Make another hem across the top for threading the elastic through. Sew the back seam – I make a French seam or an overlocked seam.

For setting in the arms on the dress, pin them about 11 cm from centre front on both sides, now make a pleat or fold with the dress fabric and machine from the wrong side to hold them in place. Catch the two knots (wrists) together by hand across the front of the body.

Thread the elastic through. Pull very tight as this is all that holds the dress up. Sew ends very firmly. Pull head through. Add your choice of hair, then tie and sew your bow (angel wings) to the back of the dress.

I use permanent marker pens and make a dot for each eye and, with red, make three dots for the mouth, two side by side, the third centred below but touching. Your unique Christmas angel is ready to decorate your tree, or to be presented as a delightful gift for any age.

Christmas Angel Template
(half size)



WHAT'S ON

During this hectic period, see if you can take some time to venture out with the family and enjoy some of the numerous activities that will be on the cards over the traditional summer holiday break.

LAVENDER HARVEST FESTIVAL

This year's harvest festival will be on Sunday 14 January from 9am to 5pm. Lavendula Lavender Farm is an easy 1½ hour drive from Melbourne at 350 Main Road, Shepherd's Flat, near Hepburn Springs. The day will have something for all the family. The harvesters will be there cutting from the lavender hedges with hand sickles. There will be puppets, stories, a maypole, pony rides and farmyard animals for the kids; and a plethora of attractions for adults as well. There is an established café for light meals, and a large produce- and craft-filled barn. An entry fee of $5.50 for adults and $2.50 for kids applies. Phone 03-5476-4393 for more details, or visit the website on www.lavandula.com.au

RAINBOW REGION MARKET

On Tuesday 5 December the Rainbow Region Organic Farmers' Market will celebrate its first birthday with a market at the usual time of 8am. In addition to the usual fresh organic produce stalls there will be various information stalls, displays and demonstrations, live local music and performances, cooking demonstrations and speakers. It will be a day celebrating community work, in all its diversity. Phone 02-6688-2288 for more details.

CITYSEARCH ONLINE

If you want to find out what is happening in your area over the Christmas and New Year period, a new online service may be able to help you with a few ideas. The site has details about entertainment over the festive season and lists the best restaurants for group bookings. There's plenty to help you plan your New Year: check out live music venues, or the best places to view the fireworks, there's activities for kids and family on New Year's eve, or maybe a river cruise could be fun. All this and more can be found on theCity Search website at: www.citysearch.com.au

PLAN AHEAD

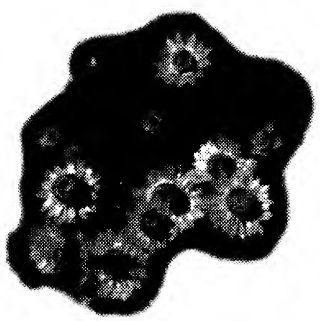
Put these in your diary for 2001.

The Secret Life of Bulbs, Mount Macedon & District Horticultural Society, March 2001.

The Sydney Royal Easter Show, April 2001.

Mind Body Spirit Sydney Festival, May 2001.

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'I will try to paint landscapes in their mind – throw pictures on the clouds of tomorrow's sky'
B Mollison, *Travels in Dreams,* 1996.

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TARO TRY IT

by Margaret Dwyer & Jo Lin,

Surry Hills, NSW.



Taro is a nutritious but underused food. This attractive variety was given to Margaret and Jo by a Queensland friend.

During the years he was growing up in Sydney, taro was always part of Jo's diet. That's strange, you might say . . . You've only heard of taro in recent years in relation to Papua New Guinea and Pacific countries.

Well, the reason is because Jo grew up as the number two son of Chinese immigrants who came to Australia in the late thirties and early forties. 'As Teo Chiew-speaking people from Southern China,' muses Jo, 'my family has always grown our own taro from tubers handed around the Sydney Chinese community. The one variety my mother still grows was reportedly "smuggled in" many years ago by someone who had some kind of diplomatic status. That's how important traditional foods are to Chinese!

'My mother still cooks up her taro for us sometimes, even though I grow more than she does! When we were kids I only remember eating it boiled with a sweet sugary sauce. These days, my 77-year-old mother still sometimes gives us savoury taro patties. She steam-cooks a large square cake tin full of mashed taro, a little rice flour for binding, peanuts, Chinese mushrooms, a few shallots and shrimps (and she includes meat for others). When this is cooked and cooled, she slices it up and fries the slices to a light brown. These can then be dipped in extra soya sauce or chilli sauce to taste.' (See also GR121, page 50, for a recipe for taro fish cakes.)

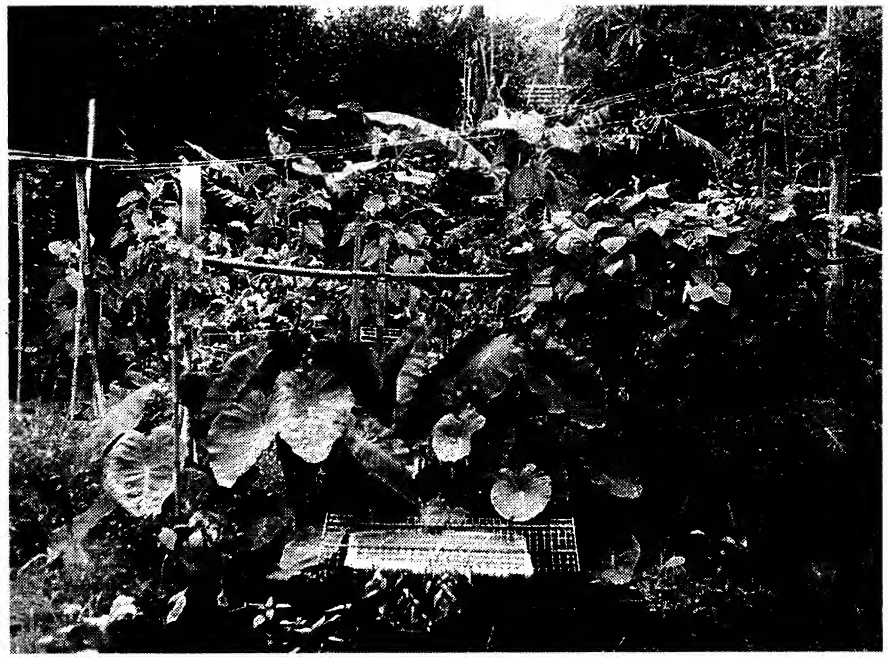
Margaret has come to value taro from a different standpoint. As a biochemist she extols the virtues of a food undervalued by many Anglo-Celtic and European Australians.

ORIGINS

We have exchanged some of our taro with another seed saver from the north coast of NSW. He and his wife have only grown one variety up to now. This variety has been handed down through his wife's family. Like their taro, they originally came from the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu). Pockets of it grow wild up the north coast and they still go out and harvest it sometimes. This taro has come to Australia with people who were originally kidnapped to work on Australian coastal plantations.

Australia's near neighbour, Papua New Guinea, can be regarded as one of the homes of taro. With about 250 varieties available, many people in PNG have considerable knowledge of the use and cultivation of this important food. During a widespread drought a couple of years ago, lack of water and bushfires destroyed sweet potato and taro crops in many areas, including the highlands, western areas, parts of the Gulf and some islands. A number of Australian nongovernment organisations responded to this need by launching public appeals. As taro growers and consumers we feel linked to the people of PNG.

Many of us grew up to believe that wheat and other high-protein staple foods are superior to low-protein staples like taro, sweet potato, plantain and cassava – foods which the women of the Pacific Islands use to feed their families. We accepted the myth that starchy foods like taro are fattening and 'bad' while foods rich in protein are 'good'. In the 1970s, Margaret was asked to teach the biochemistry of nutrition. She soon learnt that most



Taro in the vegie garden, beans and sunflowers behind, banana trees in the background.

protein in the diet of adult Australians is converted to fat.

Allergy to gluten and other wheat proteins is increasing. In the USA, where soy is a staple for many people, allergy to soya protein is quite common. We are unlikely to develop allergy to taro because taro is low in protein.

The only part of the wheat plant which can be digested by humans is the seed. Taro leaves, stems and roots are edible. Taro roots are an excellent source of fibre. There is evidence that regularly substituting taro for pasta or other wheat products provides protection against colorectal cancer. The fibre is thought to adsorb carcinogens.

Taro and other dark green leaves are rich sources of vitamins and minerals, especially vitamin A, and iron. Pale green leaves of cabbage and Iceberg lettuce contain almost zero iron or vitamin A. Vitamin A comes from the yellow-orange coloured carotenoid pigments in carrot roots. Leaves are also high in carotenoid pigments, although the green chlorophyll often camouflages the yellow pigments.

Leaves of plants indigenous to the tropics contain more carotenoids and iron than leaves of plants indigenous to temperate climates. This is to be expected as carotenoid pigments and iron-containing proteins assist chlorophyll in leaves to convert the high energy of the tropical sun into plant carbohydrate. Cabbage is indigenous to the shores of western Europe and lettuce to Siberia, according to sources in the Sydney Botanic Gardens Library.

Taro has been criticised because it contains crystals of calcium oxalate. The sharp edges of the crystals irritate the throat and inhibit the uptake of calcium by the gut. Yet, long ago women taught themselves how to dissolve these crystals so that they were no longer irritants. Readers may like to know that wheat contains chemicals called phytates which bind iron as well as calcium. This inhibits the gut's uptake of both calcium and iron.

We have also learnt about different ways of propagation from our Tongan relatives. They cut off the top few centimetres of the tuber with about half of the stem, without leaves. This is left to dry out for a few days then planted deep in rich furrows. This promotes the retention of water around the roots and the hilling up of the plant to get a bigger tuber. There are also traditional ways to plant the taro in the Tongan village setting, but that's another story!

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Jo's sister-in-law is married to a Tongan Australian. From the Tongans we have learnt about some other delicious ways to cook taro tubers and young leaves – cooking/baking with either seafood or meat and coconut milk/cream. A traditional dish is *lu* in which taro leaves are cooked with onions and mutton. Silverbeet is substituted if taro leaves are not available.

We also have Filipino friends who grow and cook taro (*gabi*). Rafael has taught us about using the stem of the plant as well as the leaves. To reduce the irritation effect, he suggests first hanging up the stem and leaves in the sun for a few days prior to cooking. Filipino Australians also use taro tubers in sweet dishes.

Raffy's Filipino Taro Snack

Here's a very simple and popular recipe for a sweet snack. Simply peel and boil the taro. Cut crosswise into thin slices. Cover cooked slices in raw sugar and grated fresh coconut (or substitute). Toasted sesame seeds can also be used. This is often eaten with an accompanying brewed ginger drink with sugar and milk.

Give It A Try

We can only conclude by encouraging *Grass Roots* readers to try eating and growing taro. It grows well in temperate and tropical areas. In colder areas it will be cut back by frosts and cold in winter, but some varieties are still worth a try. It is worth remembering that it takes a bit longer to grow and harvest this delicious food.

Note: 'Taro' here mostly refers to different varieties of *Colocasia esculenta*. Other similar 'taros' are also grown and eaten in Pacific and Asian countries and in some tropical parts of Australia. They include some species of *Alocasia, Xanthosoma* and *Cyrtosperma*.

Dr Margaret Dwyer, Jo (Jonathan) Lin and Rafael Montes are members of the Agriculture & Food Group of Action for World Development (NSW), an ecumenical social justice organisation. Part of the work of AFG is to share knowledge about staple foods. AFG members also conduct beginner and advanced permaculture courses, workshops on issues such as globalisation, fair trade and ecological sustainability. For further information on taro, write to us c/- AWD, 8th floor, 8 Kippax Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010.

STORING FRESH GINGER

An effective way to keep ginger root fresh is to place it into a sand-filled ceramic pot. Water the sand every few days.

Backyard Irrigation

by Wendy Bartlett, Nairne, SA.

If you're a mulching freak, as I am, and have had problems watering your vegetable or perennial garden effectively with minimal water usage, then keep reading. I have almost pulled all of my hair out over this issue. I've used all types of watering – hand-watering, microspray irrigation, dripper irrigation, overhead sprinklers, old pipe with holes intermittently placed along it, and seeping hoses. As I am an avid water conservationist, I will stress my plants until they cannot take it any more, before I give them a well-deserved drink. I always choose drought-tolerant plants, but vegetables need special care. They must be treated as annuals, and therefore their water requirements are more demanding than those of other plants. Watering must be deep and long so that the plant roots are forced to grow down in search of water and not run along the surface where they dry out and are not able to acquire all of the nutrients necessary for healthy growth.

I have discovered that the different types of irrigation available are not all they're cracked up to be when used in conjunction with thick layers of mulch. I am certain that many of these types of irrigation are not designed for gardeners who actually care about the soil and natural resources. For water to penetrate the thick layer of mulch and into the first few centimetres of the soil, the effective irrigation of a particular area of the garden can take hours. I simply do not have the time for this, as I have many separate garden areas and in the heat of summer I cannot waste water or time. There are many readers who survive on water from dams and bores and rainwater stored in tanks. Water to them is as precious as gold. Any method of saving water has got to be worth the effort and money to set up.

I found that microspray irrigation was fine if the soil wasn't mulched, but what is the point? You have to water more often because most of it is lost to the atmosphere. The worms will not be active in the top layers of the soil because the soil temperature is too hot or too cold. Therefore, all the benefits of worm activity are lost to the lower layers of the soil and the surface plant roots miss out on valuable nutrients. There is a problem here with soil fertility. If you are not mulching, then what food are you providing for the worms? If they are not given optimum conditions, they will not work to their full potential. On the other hand, successful microspray irrigation used in a mulched garden can be achieved, but the mulch needs to be damp at all times or it will form a barrier and cause water to just run off and be lost. The watering time must be at least a couple of hours, and probably once weekly, or the mulch layer will dry out. An occasional shower will not penetrate a dry mulch layer, so this needs to be considered when choosing appropriate times to water. This type of irrigation cannot be used when it's really windy or during the hottest part of the day. I find that the spray heads are constantly being clogged up with ants that seem to love making their nests in my polypipe. I am forever sticking a needle in and cleaning the heads out. This is impractical because when my family and myself are away on holiday, our neighbours cannot be expected to constantly check the spray heads. So, there are definite downfalls to microspray irrigation.



Drippers work well on individual trees, but soaker hose is successful and efficient in a range of situations.

A dripper irrigation system can work well with shrubs and trees as long as they are mulched with a layer 20 centimetres thick. Most trees and shrubs, once established, will not need regular watering unless conditions are very dry and hot for an extended period of time. The drippers may need to be left on for several hours, depending on soil type, and this should only need to be done once a fortnight during hot weather, less at other times. This type of irrigation does not work well with vegetables, unless they are perennial. As vegetable gardens are constantly changing from year to year, you would be constantly changing the position of the drippers and this is both tedious and unnecessary. I find that the drippers have to be checked regularly otherwise they block and you are unaware that a particular plant is not being watered.

Overhead sprinklers are subject to the same problems as a microspray irrigation system because they don't work very well on windy days, and, during the heat of the day, much of the water is lost to the atmosphere through evaporation. They can also cause favourable

conditions for fungal diseases. This is particularly relevant with black spot on roses and powdery mildew on pumpkins or zucchinis.

I have, after many years of trial and error, discovered the seeping hose, a fantastic product. There are little perforations all the way along the rubber hose, and, depending on the soil type, water filters down and out through the soil, providing water to plants in a vicinity of about 30 centimetres from the hose. For my vegetable garden and cottage perennial plants it is ideal. I can now mulch as thickly as I want and know that my plants are receiving all of the water that comes out of the hose. None is lost to the atmosphere through evaporation. I can also water at any time of the day because the mulch acts as a blanket, soil surface is cooler in summer and warmer in winter. It is also very dark under the mulch layer, a suitable environment for worms to work efficiently.

When the vegetable bed is ready to be planted, I place the hose on top of the soil, snaking it around, making sure that the distance between the rows of hose is no more than 30 centimetres. Sometimes I have to use old tent pegs to hold the hose in place. Obviously, I cannot mulch heavily over this hose until the vegetables are well established and able to cope with some slug or snail damage. Until that time, I place a thin layer of lawn clippings around each seedling and hand-water, usually once every second day. If conditions are very hot, I water in the early morning and early evening. If I don't have a lot of time to hand-water, I use a moveable circular sprinkler which attaches to my garden hose and leave it on for about 20 – 30 minutes each time I water.

As soon as the seedlings are showing good signs of healthy growth I water the soil well and place a 15 centimetre layer of well rotted compost around the plants, making sure that it doesn't come into contact with the stem, as rotting can occur and the plant can become susceptible to various diseases. The seeping hose can then be used to its full potential. I can water at any time of the day without losing valuable water to the atmosphere. I water once every four or five days during mild summer weather. During very hot weather, I water once every three to four days. I usually leave the hose on for about an hour so that the plants receive a deep watering, encouraging them to send their roots deep down into the soil in search of water instead of along the soil surface, as happens when frequent shallow watering occurs. I always check the moisture level in the soil by poking my finger through the mulch before I water. I am often surprised at how damp the soil still is from the previous watering. That, I guess, is the magic of mulch!

The seeping hose is more expensive to begin with, but buying it in bulk helps to save money. It is manufactured from recycled rubber car tyres. In the long run there is no comparison. It wins the competition hands down in my opinion. I have experimented, with some success, with this hose by using rainwater from my tank and allowing gravity to push the water through the pipe. However, in some areas of my garden the length of the hose is too long and my rainwater tank is not high enough for the water to be pushed through. If my block was steeper and the water tanks were up at the top of the block and the gardens down the bottom, I'm sure this would work. It would eliminate the need for water pressure or pumps for people who do not have access to this taken-for-granted luxury.

I can now enjoy my summer days without spending hours watering. Instead, I can be sitting in my garden enjoying the fruits of my labour. I get to spend more time with the children while the worms are working twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, and for free. There is nothing more rewarding to me than picking a juicy tomato from a healthy plant or seeing a mass of worms writhing underneath a thick carpet of mulch. Setting up a well mulched and correctly irrigated garden can save loads of water, money and time. The time spent working in the garden will be outweighed by the time spent enjoying it.

♟♙♟♙♟♙♟♙♟♙♟♙♟♙♟♙♟♙♟♙

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219 South Pumpenbil Rd, Tyalgum, NSW 2484

Livestock Health and Management

Information You Need but Haven't Known Where to Ask

If you have queries on any type of livestock send them in and we'll get our panel of experts to research the problem for you. Send them to Livestock Advice Page, Grass Roots, PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

NATURAL CHOOK KEEPING

We have four ex-battery hens who seem healthy and happy and are laying too many eggs for just us. What we are hoping you can help with is the name of, and, if possible, where to buy a book that covers in detail natural preventative measures and remedies if the girls do become sick. We have a couple of books that don't seem to give very much advice except to cull the chooks if they are sick. We would like to do our best to prevent them becoming ill, or try and help them as much as we can if they do.

The girls free range across a three-house-block garden that is closely planted with native trees and shrubs. They have plenty of access to fresh water and have a permanent, solid roosting house.

Russell and Ann,
COWES 3922.

'Backyard Poultry – Naturally', by Alanna Moore, may be just the book you are looking for. It covers behaviour and management, backyard breeds, housing, feeding, breeding, health, permaculture and suitable plant species for a backyard forest. The natural health chapter discusses general symptoms of ill health and outdated 'remedies' that are potentially toxic; it lists and describes common problems like worms and external parasites and goes through the more frequently encountered health disorders. A variety of suitable natural remedies is outlined. This book will help you set up your management system, choose appropriate feed and put in place preventative measures to keep your flock healthy and productive. 'Backyard Poultry Naturally' was published by Bolwarrah Press, RMB E482, Bolwarrah 3352, ph/fax: 03-5334-0386.

A PROBLEM RESOLVED

A big thank you for publishing my letter and answer in GR 141, I was so excited to hear what you had to say. About a fortnight ago I was given four of the same sort of fowl, Lohman pullets, and I am very happy with them. I think I was just unlucky with the previous pullets. I have spoken to the lady who gave me the chooks and she said her friend had picked these up from a different poultry farmer. They are all laying and are very quiet; it's a pleasure to have them. Thanking you all.

Dorothy Faulkner,
BOYNE ISLAND 4680.

LIGHT UP A POSSUM

We were troubled by possums a few years back so can sympathise with problems encountered by Megg and GR readers. We found a quassia spray very effective. We just boiled up a handful of the chips in water, diluted it a little and sprayed on trees and bushes they were attacking. I doubt it would help though in keeping them out of buildings. We get a Wires Newsletter second-hand from a friend and there was a paragraph recently on the success of temporary lights as a form of discouragement. Maybe it will help. Lights – quartz halogen outdoor lights being the most successful – were set up in ceilings where possums had made camp. The secret was that the lights needed to be very bright and all the ceiling space illuminated, even if it meant several lights being used. Those trying this eradication method gained success after four to seven days, the possums not being able to cope with lack of privacy and darkness. They all 'packed their bags' and relocated elsewhere, but as well, all access points had to be blocked off. Good luck Megg and others – this might be your answer. Any humane measure is worth trying.

Alexander Watts,
BATHURST 2795.

CAT AND DOG DETERRENTS

Are you sick of your garden being invaded by cats and dogs from the local neighbourhood? These sprays may help. For the cat spray add 2 parts cayenne pepper, 3 parts dry mustard and 5 parts flour to sufficient water to make a spray. For the dog spray add 1 clove garlic, 1 chopped medium onion and 5 mls Tabasco sauce to 1 lt water.

ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES FOR ANIMALS



$90 Pet Power Pack First Aid Kit
$95 with flea, worming & heartworm prevention, plus book.
$30 only for flea, worming and heartworm energy.

Please contact Jackie Fitzgerald for other products available.

Jackie Fitzgerald: Homoeopath, Herbologist, Reiki Master.
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ECO NEWS

GROWING OZONE HOLE

The ozone hole over the Antarctic is bigger and deeper than ever this year, stretching over an area more than three times the size of Australia. Despite restrictions on the use of ozone-depleting gases in the developed nations, the effects of these gases used previously are still being felt as they slowly make their way upwards to the ozone layer. Expectations that the ozone layer could be repaired by 2050 are being questioned due to new evidence that ozone depletion is being exacerbated by global warming.

FARMING SUSTAINABILITY

Increasing concerns over salinity, irrigation and water quality issues and land degradation generally have turned the spotlight on the sustainability of present farming practices in much of Australia. Farmers are major landholders and have a significant role to play in environmental conservation. Damage to the environment from unsustainable farming practices includes nutrient depletion, increasing soil acidification and salinity, pesticide contamination of soil and water, erosion, and biodiversity loss. In particular, irrigation inefficiencies have been singled out for criticism; one claim being made is that only 30 percent of irrigation water is used by the crop, the remainder being lost to evaporation and seepage. With increasing water shortages and predictions of future conflicts over water use, added to the growing realisation of the importance of restoring environmental flows, it is critical that these issues be addressed. Farmers face the dilemma of realising the need for improved practices and being willing, for the most part, to do what they can, while lacking a knowledge base they can draw on about how to farm in an environmentally sustainable manner while still generating a viable income.

There are, fortunately, some rays of hope for embattled farmers in dealing with this predicament. The CSIRO is currently undertaking major research into socially, economically and environmentally sustainable farming options, particularly for irrigation areas. There are also proposals being considered for ways that farmers can be subsidised for undertaking conservation work that is to the benefit of the community as a whole.

HERBICIDE ALTERNATIVE

Coolamon Shire in NSW has discovered a potential saving of $190 per kilometre of weed-infested roadside. The saving is engendered by the use of native grasses as part of a roadside weed control program. The grasses, spear grass (*Stipa* spp) and red grass (*Bothriochloa* spp), are able to outcompete new horehound seedlings when planted in conjunction with use of a selective herbicide, resulting in an almost 100 percent horehound seedling mortality. This outcome has encouraged the Shire to trial the use of native grasses in controlling spiny burr grass. It also offers the hope that native grasses on farms, if not overgrazed or cultivated, can provide a useful buffer against weed invasion and reduce or eliminate herbicide use.



Horehound, an invasive weed.

TOP END WILDLIFE – THE HEAT IS ON

Recent surveys by CSIRO researchers in Kakadu National Park have shown a significant decline in numbers of small and medium sized mammals, including bandicoots, quolls, tree rats, possums, and rats. This has been taken as an indication that the biota of the Top End generally is in a parlous state. The use of fire on a regular basis to 'rejuvenate' huge areas of savanna vegetation is being blamed for this situation. Every year large areas of the Northern Territory are burned late in the dry season, giving wildlife little opportunity to recover numbers between burns, and destroying the hollow logs vital to many mammals for nesting and shelter. CSIRO research shows that burning early in the dry season is less damaging as unburnt areas are left as refuges. While many believe that burning has its place as a land management tool, it is obvious that the frequency of burns needs to be examined carefully. One CSIRO ecologist has recommended a regime of burns every three to five years to optimise biodiversity.

SALINITY

It's becoming increasingly obvious that the scourge of salinity is more than a problem for country people. A year ago the Murray Darling Basin Commission reported that approximately 15 million hectares of grazing and cropping land is at risk of salinity in the next 50 years. Millions of tonnes of salt has been released into the soil through the removal of deep-rooted trees to allow planting of crops and pastures. Massive land clearing in Queensland in recent years has created conditions favourable to the development of salinity in that state where it has not previously been a problem. It is also seen as having a further detrimental effect on Adelaide's already low-quality water.

As well as affecting domestic water quality for hundreds of thousands of urban dwellers, damage to buildings, equipment and appliances from salinity is an escalating reality. As more and more tracts of land become saline, the effects on biodiversity become an increasing concern, with up to a thousand species of plants and animals under threat of extinction as a result of dryland salinity.

Much research is currently underway into both sustainable irrigation methods and alternative farming strategies. Some methods being tried include growing lucerne as part of a rotation; tree allies interspersed with crops or pastures; planting of deep-rooted, salt-tolerant tree species in recharge areas; alternative ways of using the saline groundwater, such as for fish breeding, growing seaweed, producing fish food, extracting magnesium salts.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR,

I would like to tell readers about the campaign to prevent the construction of a private marina in Coles Bay, sparking the formation of the Coles Bay Foreshore Preservation Group. Coles Bay is a very special place, being **ADJACENT TO THE FREYCINET NATIONAL PARK,** and having the Hazards and Mt Freycinet as a backdrop. Wineglass Bay has been voted one of the world's top ten beaches. This is not just about preserving a beautiful view, but also about maintaining life in the ocean. We have whales, seals, dolphins, sea turtles, and penguins. Great Oyster Bay is a natural hatchery for shark, squid, flathead etc.

There are regulations for fishermen, but who enforces them? There are Australian Standards for marinas, but they are not compulsory. We will not know the effect of this huge granite underwater edifice, until it is built – and then it will be too late. If you would like more information, please write.

The Secretary,
Coles Bay Foreshore Preservation Group, PO Box 1369,
Launceston 7250.
Fax: 03-6334-8355.

Hi Mary,

I hope all is well and you have not frozen in this cold snap. Here is an update on **KOOKABURRA PARK** for Feedback.

Since conception the park was seen as a good place to work from. Well, it took a while, but now it is happening. Modern communication systems have made the dream a reality. People with skills in the computer/internet industries are getting together and supporting each other to get businesses going. These people have come from all over the world so have a lot of valuable resource information. Others are earning money with accommodation (always in short supply).

Making and recording music, mail order business, marketing environmentally sensitive products, doing permaculture courses, puppeteering, marketing new dynamic building concepts – the list goes on. Others of course just enjoy the safe, quiet, rural ambience, feed the birds and watch the wildlife go past. If you would like to follow our progress, give us encouragement and new ideas, phone fax or look at our web site (as below), or pop in and visit. We are next to the golf course, 2.5 kilometres out of Gin Gin Queensland on the road to Bundaberg. We can make a difference, let's live our clean environmental dream.

Barry Davies
Ph: 07-4157-2850, fax: 07-4153-1358
Email: Kookaburra@sunweb.net
Web: www.sunweb.net/kooka/



Dear Grass Roots,

Hi there, I have been reading GR for the past 18 years, and now I have asked for help twice in a very short time. I'm hoping someone might be able to help me. I have a **FORDSON TRACTOR,** early 1950, EN27 model (petrol-kero). I did some time ago buy a revised manual from a tractor company in Dandenong (which I have contacted and does not have copies anymore). I did lend it to someone and now it cannot be found. I would very much like to obtain another one to copy, or if anyone would happen to have an original that they would be prepared to sell or to lend to make a copy, would be most grateful. Will cover cost for postage (etc).

PS: have also been to Motor Books in Camberwell, with no result.

John J Webb,
PO Box 386, MARYBOROUGH 3465.

Try: Plough Book Sales, PO Box 14, Belmont 3216. Ph: 03-5266-1262, fax: 03-5266-2180.

Dear GR,

I have finally laid my hands on GR No 138, and I am a bit disappointed. My letter regarding **CHEMICAL-FREE ANIMAL HUSBANDRY** was printed, but my PO box number was incorrect. It was printed No 25 but it is really 125. It's no wonder I never received any letters.

Sara Morrison,
'Wynd End', PO Box 125, NARACOORTE 5271

Dear Grass Roots & Readers,

Has anyone had any success with **REPELLING BIRDS WITH ELECTRIC WIRES** over fruit trees and vines? I've heard vague information about wires being suspended across the top of fruit trees in pairs held apart by insulators. Apparently, one wire carries an electric current from a low-voltage electric fencing energiser, as used with sheep or cattle, and the other wire is earthed. The idea is the birds land on the pair of overhead wires and get a shock through their feet, which acts as a deterrent. Can anyone help with first-hand information on how to set up such a system, and whether it is really effective? I am about to plant out some trees and vines in a country area where fruit is being absolutely ravaged by a number of bird species.

Max Hoskyns,
6 Cumulus Place, Willetton 6155.
Lot 45 Tullymorgan Rd, ASHBY, MACLEAN 2463.



Dear GR,

We are seeking a recipe for **BREAD** with fresh-ground whole wheat flour and using a natural yeast culture (not commercial added yeast), ie, similar to days-of-old when potato-water was used. Is anyone familiar with barley yeast? Where is it available?

Ian and Anita Lynch,
PO Box 152, KENILWORTH 3474.

Dear GR Readers,

I wonder if anyone has some easy instructions for **FELTING.** I have bags full of alpaca wool and I would love to make some serapes. I am also looking for instructions and a pattern for building a **SULKY** to suit a pair of ponies, 11.4 hands high.

Life has changed a lot for me in the past 12 months. I'm finally living a relaxed life away from business pressures. Anyone wanting to chat to a 30-year-old woman living the GR life can contact me. I will answer all letters.

Kit,
RMB 320 Yenellin Rd, PINGELLY 6308.

GRs 109 & 66 contain articles on felting. See p82 for ordering details.

Dear GRs,

Thank you GR readers/writers for all the wholesome and rich advice you've all contributed over the many many years I've been reading. This mag has kept us going in so many different ways. Like other readers, we would not have a little piece of self-sufficient Oz, if it wasn't for all the encouragement and sweet excitement in the pages of any GR. After many disappointing setbacks we (Ron, me and Chloe) are finally home on our very manageable one acre in a time-warped **SLEEPY TOWN CALLED ELLALONG,** near the Watagans and Cessnock.

Recently I purchased loose shellgrit for my girls (chooks), but after they scratched the whole lot out of the pan I thought I'd make little peck balls, so there isn't any wastage. Flour and water to bind, a little salt to preserve. Hand-size balls are best. On newspaper, dry in a sunny position.

I'd like to meet other GR readers in my area, so . . . look forward to hearing from you sooner or later. Go confidently in the direction of your dream and live the life you've imagined.

La-Rue, Ron & Chloe deVries,
23 Hecla St, ELLALONG 2325.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots Team,

I was pleased (at first) to see the olive special (three articles in GR139). The article by the Conlans was fine, as far as it went. There was sufficient detail to get people who might have already been interested further involved in the **OLIVE GROWING** industry, but not too much technical detail. Well done!

But, then I saw the olive press article (p59). If it was this easy, why did the olive growers of the Hunter region invest up to $10,000 each to buy a million dollar processing plant? Why did Gwydir Grove spend about the same amount for a press? We could all make our own oil using the instructions. Several major points arise from my initial reading of the article.

The use of 100 mm pipe from a scrap dealer would make the health authorities shudder. What kind of pipe? Plain mild steel will not do, it would harbour too many potentially dangerous beasties. You really would need to get stainless, and there isn't that much of it about in scrap merchants. The drilling of holes into stainless is likely to be a bit beyond the capability of the average (or below) handyperson in the home workshop. It usually needs to be cooled and needs specialist tools to cut it.

The drilling of 6.2 mm diameter holes into the pipe would let great lumps of fruit straight through, not to mention the pits. One would have to wonder why 6.2 mm diameter was selected in the first place (a quarter inch?), as many cultivars have pits less than 6.2 mm diameter. The pressure required will almost certainly rupture any cloth the cylinder is lined with.

'Happy Harry' suggested that you get a 'solid block' (of what? cement, plaster of paris or something a bit more robust?) and 'smash the olives into a pulp, pips and all'. If you have a bucket full (about 5 kg) of olives and you happily smash them with the hammer and block method, I would venture to suggest that there would be very little pulp to press. Even in the very best of circumstances, 5 kg of fruit would give about 1 kg of oil (a little less than 1 lt), assuming 100 percent recovery of the maximum 20 percent of the fruit which is oil. Smashing the fruit as suggested is likely, as noted, to be 'a bit messy', resulting in less than full recovery of the potential oil. With a bucketful of olives, one would be far better off to pickle them for table use and buy a litre of oil.

If 'the genuine product' is what the readers are after, the best suggestion that could be made is to go to the local delicatessen and insist (not ask, but insist) that they source some locally produced olive oil from one of the growing group of olive processors throughout Australia. If they say they cannot do so, find another source, as they haven't tried hard enough!

If GR wanted to do the right thing by their readers and by the growers and processors of fine extra virgin olive oils in Australia, you could contact the AOA (Australian Olive Association) for contacts and some realistic information.

On a more positive note, the article on preserving olives at home was much better (than the press article). I would mention though, that the water leaching process takes much longer than a week. We had our olives in water for upwards of four weeks with little difference in the bitterness. In disgust, we reverted to a daily-changing five percent brine solution and final storage in 10 percent. To successfully use the plain water method of pickling, one would have to use a temperature controlled fermentation method which is well beyond the scope of the article.

The second method of preserving them is often referred to as the 'dry salt' method, and takes a few weeks, but results in beautiful sweet olives. One caution, though. If you wash the salt off, you must eat them really quickly. We have preserved several kilograms in this way and store them under oil without first washing the salt off. This way they keep much longer. One final comment on this method, the olives must be very black, otherwise they will not taste as nice!

Happy olive eating (and make sure you always ask for Australian olives and olive products). Support our local industry!

John Attwood,
Chairman, Oxley Co-operative Limited,
PO Box 266, SOUTH TAMWORTH 2340.

Dear GR,

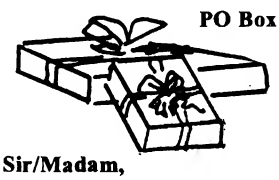
The article about **DAIRY PRODUCTS** was quite interesting, thanks. Real buttermilk might be higher in nutritional value, but that it tastes better too is a fact which is connected with the value. It's a mistake to think that something which doesn't taste nice, must be healthier. It is just commercialism which tries to trick our taste buds. Real buttermilk is delicious. It reminds me of when I was on an Alm (high summer pastures) in Austria, when I was about 14 years old and I had my first real buttermilk, a piece of farmhouse bread and fresh butter. I turned the butter churn and got a blister; it is unforgettable (not the blister).

It seems that it must have been last century when I think back, but it was in 1960. We stayed at the farmhouse, which was not as high up as the Alm, but still overlooked the whole valley like a king of the mountain. The farmer rented rooms for summer guests for the first year. We, my parents and I, were the first guests he ever had. The bread was baked in a big Kachelofen (tiled stove) which was fired from the kitchen, but actually stood in the good room of the house, with a bench around it. There was another tiled stove in the kitchen to cook and bake cakes and for the hot water as well.

Today the house still stands, but the tiled stoves are gone and the farmer has built a hotel on the site. He might be richer in money now, but the Alm is a ski hut for tourists. Even he said to us that the silliest thing he did was to demolish this tiled oven, which you could build nowadays, but it would never be the same. Now you get this packed little butter for breakfast, like everywhere. But who would live on the Alm for little money and no comfort to look after the cows, milk them, make butter or even cheese and carry it down from there to the valley in a rucksack? It's intense hard work and dangerous too. If a cow goes astray, you have to go and look where she is, and in that rocky terrain it can be dangerous, as the old stories tell. There are still cattle up in the mountains in summer, mostly for meat, but some farmers still do it the old way. In Vorarlberg, the most western state of Austria, the farmers sell their fresh milk from cooled self-serve automats. We lived near the city of Salzburg before coming to Australia 15 years ago and we bought our milk fresh at a farm nearby.

By the way, Tirol is in Austria and not in Switzerland, as the article seems to suggest. The cattle breeds might be Swiss, but they could be any breed which is suited for the mountains. There is even an Austrian breed, which is called Montafon. They have dark brown-greyish skin. Sorry, I'm a chatterbox and have to stop, because I could go on. We love your magazine, even though we are not self-sufficient.

Heidi & Hans,
PO Box 2154, ASHGROVE WEST 4060.





Dear Sir/Madam,

FOR HONEY BEE HIVES WITH MITES IN THEM lay down maple syrup, three tablespoons at a time, to one side of the entrance to the honey bee hive. Make sure it is the honey bee entrance and make certain honey bees' supply of maple syrup is refreshed every day at dewdrop in morning preferably. Takes two years to work, but saves bees and helps them become immune and strengthens larvae.

WASP ATTACKS, try this: Take three cups basil and twelve cups hot water. Soak for five minutes only, strain, and leave cup of mixture near entrance of hive. Puts off wasps from attacking honey bees.

Jessica.
23 Hecla St, ELLALONG 2325.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR Readers,

Having purchased tobacco seed and a book about growing and curing the stuff from a GR advertiser, I set into following the instructions. Now growing and drying the tobacco is no problem, but I wonder if any GR readers can tell me how they cured and pressed it and how they cut it up. How do I make a press? What do I use to cut the finished product with? Has anyone ever done it cheaply and on a small scale?

Dulcie Clarke,
34 Racecourse Rd, YEPPOON 4703.

Replies should be sent to Dulcie personally, they cannot be printed in Feedback.

Dear Grass Roots,

I am writing in response to Kay Edwards (GR131) **REGARDING ECZEMA**. My little boy, Bryce, responded to zinc and coal tar ointment almost immediately. Admittedly, his eczema was fairly mild, but I have been told by many others that, despite the mess, this product is excellent. It is available at most chemists, but if you apply it before dressing, you will not be able to remove the stains from clothing. Bryce's eczema cleared up virtually overnight. We also found that by not bathing him every day, the eczema also responded. We were bathing him every three to four days, with minimal use of soap. He is five years old now and has not had an episode for three years. I hope this is of some help to you.



Linda Kendall,
BORONIA 3155.

Dear Grass Roots,

Does anyone have a detailed recipe for making **APPLE CIDER VINEGAR**? Also, is there anywhere I can get a cider press? Thank you for your mag.

Jenny,
39 Great Ocean Road, APOLLO BAY 3233.

Dear Readers,

Is there anyone who knows how to completely **ERADICATE NUT GRASS** over a large area? I'm interested to learn how to combat this problem.



Richard Malin,
PO Box 550, SARINA 4737.
Ph: 07-4943-1650.

To All You Lovely People,

I have every copy of GR since the year dot and still love it! Issue 140 (front cover) shows Peter Pedals' (from Rainbow Power) 12 volt **PELTON WHEEL HYDRO UNIT**. I wonder if this could be an article for the future? Power for 24 hours!

Where I live, at Sunrise Farm community, we have three dams that overflow into each other, from one to the next to the next. My water supply takes off from the third and is gravity-fed to my cottage in tall trees. This time of the year when there's a lot of shade, a hydro scheme would be ideal.

Barry Newton,
Sunrise Farm, W TREE 3885.

Dear Grass Roots,

Living in an old weatherboard house I was continually **INVADED BY RATS AND MICE** in the walls and ceilings where the cats were unable to reach them. In desperation, and almost broke from buying rat poison, I purchased a little plug-in gadget called Pest Free from the mail order Innovations company (Private Bag 28, Frenchs Forest 1639). It sends an electrical pulse throughout the house wiring, and rodents, beetles, cockroaches, spiders etc just don't live here any more. Even the persistent daddy-long-legs have gone. A wonderful product. Thanks GR – another wonderful product! Read from cover to cover.

Bart Boadle,
34 Smiths Rd, LETHBRIDGE 3332.

Dear Megg & Crew,

We have been avid readers for quite a while now, and have often thought 'we must subscribe, and be sure of getting your magazine, without having to look through the various shops to find a copy'. Well finally we are doing it. We have followed the various writers with interest over the years and have hoped to travel and actually meet some of the people involved. Alas, however, that was not to be, at least in the past. Maybe now there is a possibility.

For many years I, like a lot of other people, suffered from an undiagnosed complaint that caused me a lot of problems. Since then I have been diagnosed as having fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome, although there is still a lot of confusion about where one starts and the other finishes. During this time I have had two lots of coronary artery bypasses, a blocked artery in my skull, plus a few other inconveniences more recently, such as pneumonia, shingles and a bit of trouble with spinal stenosis. I have got over most of the other problems to some degree, but the fibromyalgia and CFS still linger on. I was fortunate enough to stay in employment through all of this, but a little over three years ago, I was made redundant, at 63 years of age, and immediately after had my second lot of bypasses. To become unemployed at that age means permanent unemployment.

My basic trade qualifications are those of an electrical fitter and mechanic (in Queensland – A-Grade electrician in some other states). When I had my first lot of bypasses I also got the blocked artery in my skull, which I was told could recur at any time, so for safety I studied for a Diploma of Teaching and became a technical teacher in TAFE colleges in Queensland. I worked in engineering and, strangely enough, horticulture during my time in TAFE.

Our thoughts have been to travel and try to get something to do along the way, even if only **WORK IN EXCHANGE FOR KEEP**, or part pay and keep etc. I have done many different things; worked in mines, hotels and my own business, a lot of different types of electrical work (industrial machines, generator sets welders, pumps, boilers, house wiring, some basic electronics etc), built our own house, all our own automotive work from motor rebuilds to general services. We have our house on the market and are trying to make up our minds if we should buy a caravan or not when we sell the house. Our other alternative is to join a group and buy a share in one of the communities that seem to be so popular now.

We are both interested in Australian native plants, and Elaine is interested in all plants. I have slowed down a lot I guess, but keep active in most areas, including using my computer. By the time you get this I will be trying out the Net. If I can help anybody in any area of interest, especially with CFS and fibromyalgia information, or basic electrical knowledge, please contact us at our home address. We will still be reading intently to see if anybody else's experiences encourage us to attempt a particular course.

Bill & Elaine Pilgrim,
PO Box 403, IPSWICH 4305.

Dear GR & Readers,

I am 23, female and from Sydney. City life offers many opportunities but, like many GR readers, none for me. I am seeking to work as an **ASSISTANT TRAINEE VETERINARIAN.** I approach GR readers because I would prefer to live in a smaller city or town and work with native animals primarily. I am able to move anywhere and undertake the necessary studies. I have relevant skills but not specific to this area and TAFE gives priority to applicants in the field. Please contact Justine with possibilities for 2001.

Currently in transit, please phone:
0410-624-984.

Contributors and correspondents who want letters or articles returned are requested to include correct postage.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Megg & GR Readers,

I have been reading this great magazine since I first borrowed GR from my local library. At that time we lived at Flagstaff Hill in South Australia in a lovely home with Sturt Gorge National Park across the road. However, for the last three years we have lived in a small unit in Sydney. No birds, no endless sky, no beautiful trees. We try to make the most of it, but we really miss our home.

This is the first time I have written to you because I have two requests. Firstly, since we have a **NORTH-FACING BALCONY** we have finally decided to try and grow some herbs and vegetables. Would anyone be able to help us with hints and ideas on what grows well on a balcony and doesn't require a lot of space or soil to grow well?

Secondly, I love knitting, baby clothes in particular. I've recently discovered the ease of knitting with **TORTOISESHELL KNITTING NEEDLES**, but they are no longer available for sale because tortoises are protected, and fortunately the needles are no longer manufactured. However, if there are any GR Readers who have some needles they no longer use, or know of someone who has them, I would be really happy to buy them from you. I'm also looking for old knitting patterns, especially old black and white pattern books. I just love the old styles, especially baby layettes and shawls, as well as ladies' jumpers and cardigans. Most people throw out old knitting patterns when they've finished with them, but don't do that, contact me and I would be more than happy to have them.

Both of these requests are made in anticipation of learning from people who can help, or who would like to just drop me a line, particularly if you are a knitter.

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to GR and to feel part of a special group of people.

Jillian McDonnell,
4/76 Albert Rd, STRATHFIELD 2135.



Dear Megg,

Thank you for all the inspiration and information that comes our way through *Grass Roots*. I would like some ideas on how to **PRESS LINSEED AND AVOCADOS** for oil in the home kitchen. Also, people's experiences gathering, drying and cooking seaweeds. Any correspondence on these subjects most welcome.

Dawn Carson,
11 Elliott St, WAITARA, NEW ZEALAND.

Hello Everyone,

Firstly, I would like to thank one and all for putting together a great magazine. It is a real buzz when my mag turns up in my letterbox and a mad scramble to the phone to see if Mum has her copy yet. I've been a fan of GR for the last 12 years, when I found a copy at the house of a friend, and had been getting it off and on since until I introduced my mum to it about 2½ years ago. When Mum asked me what I wanted for a birthday present I had no hesitation: 'A *Grass Roots* subscription thanks Mum.'

I have since moved, by myself, to Jandakot, WA, from my home of Bendigo, Vic. I'm **LIVING IN A CARAVAN PARK**, which I love. The rates are cheap, and how many people my age (28) can say they own their own home, one they can take with them when they leave?

I have a small foam box garden in which I'm successfully growing carrots, turnips, lettuce, as well as herbs, and, most importantly, hot chillies. I'll be here for a few years as I save money to follow my dreams of travelling around Australia, and then finally setting down my own roots on a small farm. But I'm not in any hurry and who can say what the future may bring or where it may take you?

Nicole Metcalfe,
Jandakot Caravan Park,
12 Hammond Rd, JANDAKOT 6164.

Dear Grass Roots,

We are a family of five who currently live in South Gippsland, Victoria, and we home educate our three children. We are **CONSIDERING MOVING TO TASMANIA** and have planned a holiday for November 2000. We are interested in hearing from anyone who has made the move, or who might have any information or hints about how to go about it. We have quite a few animals to take with us, including two cows and a pony, so any information would be greatly appreciated. We would also like to hear from any other home schoolers in Tasmania.

Gary & Carolyn Johnston,
PO Box 265, KORUMBURRA 3950.

Dear GR Readers,

After using the recipe from issue 123 Oct/Nov 1997, for a **PIONEER RECIPE LEMON YEAST BREAD**, the result was the bread didn't rise. Please advise.

Recently I viewed a program for soya milk users. I am lactose intolerant and have been consuming Soya Life. The program stated there are effects from using **SOYA PRODUCTS**, much to my concern. I have stopped consuming soya milk. I need suggestions, advice on a substitute for milk/calcium products. Please help.

Olympia Rosa Buemmi.

Dear Megg & All at Grass Roots,

Well, it is time to renew my subscription to my favourite magazine once again. It is the only magazine I devour from front to back and still enjoy it as much as the first one I read about 20 years ago! I am a keen reader always at the library and I drop everything when my copy arrives.

My husband has been retired about three years now and as we get along it's been a great time. I like to cook and try new recipes. (The next thing I'm going to make is sauerkraut.) I must try not to be so busy (or lazy!) and write another article as I'm always trying new things (food).

Megg, your articles about Suni wanting your plants and herbs amuse me as my daughters are the same (only older). They also like the recipes. You could say I try things and give the OK.

Theresa Powell,
9 Kersten Crt, ROCHEDALE SOUTH 4123.

Dear GR & Readers,

I am on my third visit to Australia in five years. I love the country. Each time I am here I buy your magazine, mainly for the letters page. It is heartening to read about what you are doing, your hopes, and the support you give each other. We don't seem to have such a positive open forum in any of the publications I have come across in the UK.

On my next visit to Australia, which I hope will be in July/August of 2001, I would like to spend some of the time living and working in an **ALTERNATIVE/ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY**. I am a 37 year old, single, vegan, male. I find myself stuck in a bit of a rut in the UK, with a job and lifestyle I don't much care for. I would love to get out of the rat race. So if any group/family out there, whatever size or setup, would like a working guest for a few weeks next year, so I can find out what's possible, I would love to hear from you.

Simon Wilson,
237 Rectory Rd, PITSEA, ESSEX. SS13 IAJ. UK.

Dear Readers,

We are interested in one day **BUILDING AN A-FRAME HOUSE** but are having difficulty in finding a book or plans of such. Would anybody know of a book or have a book or plans that could be photocopied? We are considering settling in the area of Queensland between Gympie and Bundaberg. If anyone from that area would be interested in writing to us it would be greatly appreciated.

Leanne & Graeme Arber,
14 Kokoda St, MORWELL 3840.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Editors,

Just another little note with the message that I'm so glad I did discover your magazine, it's so interesting and entertaining, especially your Feedback-Linkup-Feedback – so many valuable tips and hints. Before finding your magazine, I wasn't really interested, I did not have a green thumb. I'd love to see people's beautiful gardens and occasionally I'd taste their home-grown vegies. Immediately I'm reminded of my childhood again, when carrots tasted like carrots and apples tasted like apples.

This year for the first time in my life (I'm 68), I did buy some plants to grow my own vegies, and I must say it was such a delight, pottering in the garden. I'm sure my immune system did get a boost (I am struggling with chronic fatigue and ME – it has gone on for years, but there's always hope).

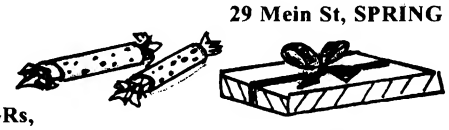
To read through your magazine and read other people's ideas and tips is such a delight, I never get bored with *Grass Roots*.

Just to help other readers, I did discover something new that really helped me to feel better. I'm sure it will work for other people with chronic fatigue syndrome; even it it helps a few people, I will be happy that I wrote this letter. It's called **AMARANTH**, grain of the gods, as the Aztec's called it. Since using amaranth as a cereal and as a flour, I feel so much better. With chronic fatigue syndrome one does get a lot of brainfog, one can't think clearly; well amaranth has changed all that. I'm so much clearer in my head, I sleep better, I have more energy.

Amaranth has high quantities of all eight essential amino-acids (so badly needed by the brain during CFS). It's easily digestible (92%), a plus, as with CFS one also has digestive problems often. Amaranth has high nutritive value and is gluten-free and has no cholesterol. It also has fourteen other nonessential amino-acids, contains vitamin E and phytosterols which are common in soya beans. After about two weeks, I felt the difference. I ate it every morning, mostly as a cereal. I do feel I have to write this important discovery as there are so many CFS people suffering in silence, because not much can be done about it.

Thank you so much for giving me a boost (also) with your interesting articles.

Mrs W Quaedulieg,
29 Mein St, SPRING HILL 4004.



Dear GRs,

Angela and I have been friends since high school, some forty years now. In that time we have been animal crazy. We are writing this article to see if there are people looking to **LEAVE THEIR CATS, DOGS**, or whatever, in a **CARING ENVIRONMENT**, either while on holiday, in hospital, or if anything more serious should happen to you.

We are country orientated with our own horses, dogs, cats, exotic birds, rabbits, guinea pigs, and, over the years, much more. On acreage, we would like to provide a home away from home, not just a boarding situation but loving care and comfort, so your pet does not fret too much for you.

Clients' needs would be met, if you have any specific requirements. A vet would be on call. The main thing is that your pet would be by the fire in winter, with cuddles and a lovely protected yard year round with room to romp in. Your pet would be fed, groomed, exercised, just as you would do it yourself.

This article is to put out feelers to see if there is a need for this type of service. We would love to hear from you to find out just how you feel. Would it put your mind at rest to know your much loved pet is looked after the way you would like? Would a farm of this nature be viable?

Joanne Egan & Angela Clements,
'Sutton Park Cottage', LAGGAN 2583.

Dear GR Friends,

Well here I am still stuck in the suburbs, dreaming of the bush, the years flying by ever faster and the only mag I buy from the paper shop is GR. I have been battling to renovate this old house for the last six years. I undertook this project when forced to move away from my soul mate; at least it kept me busy, plastering, painting, concreting, plumbing, with a large variety of jobs. Perhaps I may write about it all one day, who knows?

My main reason for writing is to begin my search for a home, somewhere **NORTH OF TAREE** (NSW) and preferably close to the coast, or at least within an hour's drive. A small acreage perhaps that I can retire on (when retirement arrives) would be wonderful, and in the meantime I'll slog away working in the city, with my dreams in the country.

Finances when I retire won't be all that great, so I would consider MOs, although I have only read about them in GR, so if anyone can supply me with information as to what the advantages and disadvantages are all information would be greatly appreciated. All letters will be answered or I can contact you through email if necessary.

I would like to say 'hello' to Libby's mum, who I know reads your mag as I do. Thank you GR for a great Aussie icon.

P McLaren,
26 Patterson Ave, EDGEWORTH 2285.

Dear GRs,

I am a full-time external student, and I plan on travelling to NSW, VIC and SA from November seeking seasonal employment. I am seeking fellowship with **REFORMED CHRISTIANS**, as well as places to camp on private properties, in return for labour. I use a camper with external shower and chemical WC facilities. I am a handyman, have experience in caravan park grounds upkeep, clerical work, customer service etc. I travel solo, have no pets, n/s, n/d. Appreciate any offers. Thanks and god bless.

Natale Polito,
MS 379, CHILDERS 4660.

Hello Every/Anybody,

My name is John Chester. I am 51 years old. I get a social security pension from the Aussie government. I wrote in about four years ago. I live in the bush in Denmark district – south-west Aussie. I have a pink and grey cockie, four horses, and three Stag Hound x hunting dogs. We hunt wild pigs a bit. I play guitar and mouth organ and I sing a bit on the streets. I camp out – I have camped out for 10 years.

Two of my horses are ponies. Sometimes I give pony rides. One of my ponies is a brumby mare and she had a foal. I used to milk her and drink the milk – it's good milk, healthy and tastes good. I move around a bit. I have a net and catch fish sometimes.

When I'm on the road it is dangerous sometimes with horses and dogs. People in big trucks and cars don't always slow down and they pass me fast and nearly have accidents with oncoming vehicles. Still, everyone has their lifestyle – then the grave – then the spirit world. Such is life.

It anyone writes to me I'll try and write back. Maybe I'll write back, maybe I won't. All the best to you people. Top of the day to yez all.



John Chester,
PO Box 586, DENMARK 6333.

Dear Grass Roots,

I am wondering if anyone could help me **FIND VOLUNTEER WORK** on a self-sufficient farm? I am very keen to learn about all things relative to self-sufficiency. Although I am 17 years old I think I could be a helpful hand on a weekend every so often. So, if you're wanting to teach, and live in the Yarra Valley area of Vic, please write to me. I will respond to all letters. Thank you.

Nathan Henderson,
21 Parker Rd, SILVAN 3795.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

I was inspired by several aspects of Gwen Leane's article in a recent edition on date palm rescue in SA – 'Opportunity Lost & Found' – concerning the work of Roger Christophersen. I am particularly anxious to know about the specifics of what plastic bottle, **GRADES OF PLASTIC** will be best to withstand deterioration, effects of weathering, heat and cold etc, and for how long. Would it be a subject for a suitable article for your magazine? I am a member of a community (intentional) on the south coast of WA and we have several dams and soaks which could benefit greatly from the water-saving aspects of using the plastic bottles, but some of us are querying whether the dams could be left with a lot of disintegrating plastic pieces after a year or two?

I agree with Roger Christophersen – a wonderful opportunity for recycling. Here we lose one metre per year to evaporation, inland it is two metres, in Perth it is 1.7 metres per annum.

Margaret Leslie,
27 David St, ALBANY 6300.

Dear Grass Roots,

For the last few years I have been trying to get the **OLD WAY OF TANNING SKINS**. I would like the one for leaving the hair on for mats and the one to take the hair off for making leather.

Hope one of the GR readers might be able to help me.

Judith Lenz,
Lot 24 Normanby Rd, BINBEE via BOWEN 4805.

To the Editor of Grass Roots,

My husband and I and two boys (9, 18) are planning to **BUY A MOTORHOME** in approximately two years time, and would like to travel around Australia. Haven't got a clue of how to go about it. Could you publish this letter, to put us in contact with like-minded people who can possibly give us some ideas?

Carol & Gordon Evans,
43 Osborne Tce, DECEPTION BAY 4508.

Dear GRs,

We have recently moved onto our 20 acres in country Victoria. We are planting and mulching with permaculture principles in mind. With two small children, a house which is a 'renovator's dream', and setting up a business at home, there just aren't enough hours in the day.

We would like to get our kitchen and main living area up to scratch as soon as possible for the sake of safety, smooth functioning and everybody's sanity. We will be painting, of course, as part of the procedure, and this is where we're hoping for some help from GR readers.

The walls and ceiling are currently heavily smoke stained due to smoke from the open fireplace. Every so often we see gusts of smoke appearing to come back down the chimney and drift around the room. Can anyone recommend literature on **FIREPLACE/ CHIMNEY DESIGN**, rectifying existing problems etc? We have seen metal 'hoods' attached to chimneys, not very attractive but possibly the answer.

Also, does anyone have any **ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PAINT RECIPES**? Would also like to hear from anyone who has oiled exterior weatherboards rather than painted. Every time we mention it we get only the negative comments on how long it will take and how hard it will be (from people who have never done it). We are interested in any suggestions on how to go about it, what sort of oil to use and any tips on making it easier.

Teresa & Rod,
235 Browns Rd, SCARSDALE 3351.

See the article 'Liquid Assets' in GR138 for some economical paint alternatives.

Anonymous letters will not be published. Please indicate if you would like personal details to be withheld.

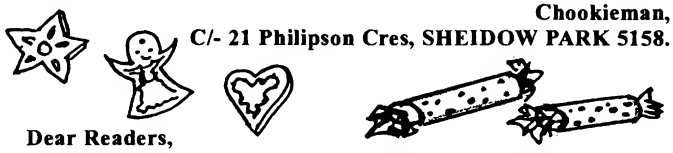
Dear GR Readers,

Re 'Letter to a Battery Hen', by Bettie in GR135. Yes **BATTERY HENS** all live in appalling conditions. A few others and myself are involved in rescuing battery hens, when they are considered 'inefficient'. Otherwise they are gathered into a container and gassed to death. Approximately every six to eight weeks we pick up 1000 – 2000 battery hens, bring them back to the property where they free range. Some die, not knowing how to find food, most learn from existing stock. Some die, not enough feathers, too cold. Some die, weird things wrong with them. But 80% live happily, many going to good homes later.

If every second household had a few chookies, imagine! Virtually no batteries anymore, no wasted food scraps, great therapy for owners and kids, manure for plants. Any negatives?

Pat on back for all yous involved in getting this mag into our hands. My parents used to tell me 'hard work never killed anyone'. Seems with the modern, technologically advanced age, 'less physical work is killing us'. Keep busy!

Chookieman,
C/- 21 Philipson Cres, SHEIDOW PARK 5158.



Dear Readers,

I have compiled a **ZUCCHINI RECIPE BOOK** of 87 pages and 460 recipes and an **EGGPLANT RECIPE BOOK** of 55 pages and 70 recipes. I have every solution you could possibly imagine for a bumper harvest of zucchini – from rice fritters and quiches to omelettes, lasagne, and even cakes, muffins and relish. When my husband, Peter, presented me with an armful of home-grown zucchinis I wasn't sure what to do with them other than stuff them! I felt sure there were other gardeners/cooks in the same predicament, so I decided to compile a book of zucchini recipes, and later eggplant recipes. I am currently working on a silverbeet recipe book. I wrote to magazines and newspapers asking readers to send their recipes. The response was overwhelming. The book contains recipes from all over Australia. I am now looking for lemon, broccoli, cauliflower and sweet potato recipes. If you have any please send to the address below. To order a copy of either book please send a cheque or money order for $12 (including postage).

Roslyn Deakin,
PO Box 396, CROYDON 3136.

Dear Megg, Mary & GR Readers,

Just felt like writing to some of you wonderful people. I have lost touch with quite a few of my friends from years and years gone by. Was a member of the Gulgong Writing Group in NSW during the 1980s and later joined a Bundaberg Poets Group, after moving to Queensland over eleven years ago. Have had a few books published and poems also. I lived on a 35 acre farm near Gulgong, for some time and had Angora goats and various other animals and birds. I later owned 25 acres at Grattai, Mudgee, NSW. Here I had fruit and nut trees, which were easier to manage than the goats. Another few years slipped by and once again illness, or 'itchy feet', caused me to move to Queensland. I thought the warmer weather would be good for my asthma, but not so.

However, I still manage to enjoy life and keep active and busy. I have a lovely rural block with rockeries and vegie gardens and have numerous hobbies and interests: photography, ornithology, art, knitting and making latch-hook rugs, as well as my writing and poetry.

I turned 75 years old in January, 2000, but still drive my own car, do my own shopping and housework, so consider myself very lucky. Would **LIKE TO HEAR FROM ANYONE**, and all letters answered.

Elsie Pye,
'Spindrift', TORBANLEA 4662.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

Re M & J Santillo's (GR138) request for info: I have sent some on to them, but anyone else seeking info on Tourette's Sydnrome/ADD/OCD etc write to me with 2 x 45 cent stamps (photocopy and postage).

Re R & R Jennings request (GR139) for **LOBELIA TEA:** For this or any other dried/fresh herbs, rare or from overseas, for smoking, tea or medicinal use, write to: Medicine Garden, PO Box 6432, South Lismore, NSW 2480.

Re Rachel's request (GR139) for alternatives to commercial sunblock: Those interested send an SAE and 2 x 45 cent stamps for **HOMEMADE SUNSCREEN** and zinc blockout cream recipes.

To Marje Bates (GR140): Thank you for your boiled cakes suggestion, it's brought on a fresh bout of creative ideas for when I return to gas stovetop cooking 'camp style' in a few weeks.

To All: Australian Kindness Week will be from Nov 6 – 17, to coincide with World Kindness day. Don't forget to spread some acts of kindness amongst your family, friends and most of all to those you don't know. For inspiration and ideas contact the Kindness Movement, PO Box 271, Milsons Point, NSW 2061 (ph: 02-9437-5300, or www.kindness.com.au).

My requests: If anyone has a copy of any or all of the below books or where I can buy/order them, please write – I'm happy to pay. *Three in a Bed*, Deborah Jackson, *The Family Bed*, Tine Thevenin, *The Continuum Concept*, Jean Liedloff.

Does anyone know a supplier/shop where I can buy any of the following ingredients for homemade cosmetics? Salt petre, gum arabic, soapwort powder, kaolin clay, carmine colouring, precipitated chalk, alkanet root, clear henna.

Kelia,
PO Box 531, BELLINGEN 2454.

Your letter arrived too late for Australian Kindness Week 2000 but interested readers can obtain information and be well prepared for 2001.

Dear Grass Roots Readers,

I have been a GR reader for quite a long time now and have always enjoyed it, especially the letters pages. Compared with other publications of similar price, it is certainly good value and we learn something new all the time. If anyone would like to **WRITE TO ME**, I would be happy to answer your letters.

My age is 70 plus. I still enjoy life and have an enquiring mind. I love to read, write letters, do a little craft work, and enjoy good TV and radio programs. I am not into the soapies! I have not been a farmer, but have moved around Tasmania and lived in country towns as well as the city. Sadly, two of my pen friends have died recently and I miss their letters. Bridport is a nice little seaside town here on the north-east coast, only one hour from Launceston, so I am far from isolated. The people are very friendly and generous and have made me feel at home.

May I quote a lovely little poem I saw recently in an English magazine?

Let me grow lovely, growing old
So many fine things do;
Laces, and ivory and gold,
And silks need not be new;
And there is healing in old trees,
Old streets a glamour hold;
Why may not I, as well as these,
Grow lovely, growing old?



Today, when everybody seems to be rushing around, and spending thousands of dollars looking for eternal youth and beauty, don't we feel like saying stop! **JUST RELAX,** and live with what we are. East sensibly, and stop worrying about things we cannot change.

Mrs Barbara Jenkins,
1/19 Barnett Cres, BRIDPORT 7262.

Dear GRs,

The pioneering spirit, as demonstrated in the article 'Simple Olive Oil Press' (GR139), is admirable and commendable. The following points are intended to help those **OLIVE OIL EXTRACTION** enthusiasts to overcome potential problems and avoid disappointments. A quick calculation suggests that the processing capacity of the proposed olive oil press is about one kilogram of olives. Assuming that all factors are favourable, the maximum oil yield will be about 250 grams. But in reality, I doubt whether the yield will reach anywhere close to this point. A 10 – 15 percent oil yield or less might be a realistic expectation under these conditions.

Another point to consider is that unless nonreactive steel is used, (eg stainless steel), there is a real danger of iron traces being leached into the olive oil. Note that iron acts as a catalyst for oxidation – olive oil's worst enemy.

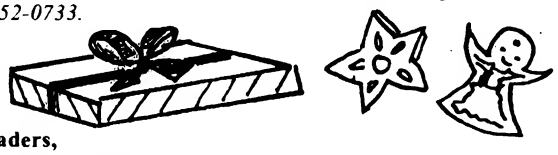
The crushing needs to be quick, and, in order to facilitate easy and efficient extraction, the paste needs to be mixed (called 'malaxation') prior to pressing. But a lengthy crushing and malaxation time will result in undesirable oxidation. Because the crushing of the olive stones might be very difficult and lengthy it might be advisable to consider crushing only the olive flesh and extracting oil only from the resulting pulp (called *sola polpa* in Italian).

Although not recommended, water could be added during the malaxation period, in order to facilitate an easier extraction of the oil. The increase of the temperature of the pulp could be also considered, taking care not to exceed 33°C – the maximum recommended temperature. However, a lower temperature will result in better oil quality.

In pickling olives, re your article 'Olives for the Table', the following points will help for improved results. The immersion of olives in water, as the article suggests, is only suitable for the green and possibly the very firm black olives. Prolonged immersion in water of more mature olives, will result in softening them, in losing their texture and in the reduction of their keeping qualities. Also, freezing olives is only recommended for olives with a lower water content, such as naturally shrivelled olives.

Mark Dymiotis,
25 Barnett St, HAMPTON 3188

Mark Dymiotis is a researcher, writer and teacher of the Greek/Mediterranean everyday diet. His classes include Olives and Olive Oil, Old-Style Bread Making (sour dough), Oven Building, Oven Firing, Organic Vegetable Growing (for beginners), Old Style Wine Making (without yeast or preservatives) and Everyday Cooking (largely vegetarian) with the CAE and Monash University Short Courses. He may be contacted through the CAE on 03-9652-0733.



Dear Readers,

We are a young family seeking to create a beautiful, alternative lifestyle based on tribal ideals. We would love to connect with like-minded people who could join us, or help us in achieving our dreams. We feel that **INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY** is the only option and hope to buy into 'something' in 2001. We hardly know where to begin our quest, so we're reaching out to fellow GR readers for guidance, inspiration, or anything else on offer. To sum us up: nondenominational, home birthing, conscious parenting, unschooling, antivaccination, committed to spiritual growth and a sustainable future. We envisage a home in far north NSW or Queensland. We'd love to hear from anyone who shares our ideals and understands our need for a loving, supportive social environment. Please write, or email: minjarrah@hotmail.com

Minjarrah,
37 Burg St, EAST MAITLAND 2323.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots People,

Perhaps someone out there might like to **SHARE A HOME IN CLARE**, South Australia? I moved here a year ago from a share house with friends, in order to create a fruit, chook and vegie haven in a cleaner environment than Adelaide. I've family nearby and great friends, but do find I miss the daily cheer and inspiration of living with like-minded people (pinko-greenie . . . is that pale khaki?).

Clare Valley is a fertile winery district in the Northern Mount Lofty Ranges. Our climate is temperate Mediterannean; hot summers, frosty winters and an average rainfall around 600 mm p/a, around one-third more than Adelaide. With around 4000 people, Clare is well serviced with shopping, health care (including alternative) and community facilities (halls, pool, gym etc). Rarer organic items are available in Adelaide (2 – 2½ hours), to which a reliable bus service runs to and from most days. Tourism supports wineries, cafes and restaurants, yet Clare is still small enough to walk from end to end. There are parks, walking trails, lookouts and even a lake (at the end of my street!).

I've a three-bedroom Housing Trust transportable on a large town block, gently sloping north-east with clay loam soil. Established native trees attract birds and there are skinks, bluetongues, bugs, spiders, and worms galore. There are established peaches, grapes, nectarine and herbs, and I've since added more fruit, herbs and vegies. 'Matey' crows in the wee small hours, but you soon get used to him. 'The girls' provide eggs and 'the feral patrol' (3) share the house from predusk to mid-morning and wear bells. The only real pests are oxalis and creeping grass.

I have a stable anxiety-related disorder which I manage well, and sometimes work for the Mental Health Service and Schizophrenia Fellowship doing public speaking, peer education and worker training. I'm in the process of switching to even lower toxicity and cruelty free products, try to avoid packaging and recycle where possible. I listen to Triple J, think Henry Rollins is cool and am interested in art, writing, mental health, social justice and permaculture. My home is smoke and drug free!

If you've been thinking of moving to a similar situation and are inspired by GR this could be the place for you. Please feel welcome to email me at Sorcha2000@hotmail.com, or phone c/- 08-8842-1477.

Sorcha.

Dear Grass Roots,

I could not help feeling sorry for Darryl McKay after reading his article 'A Capital Idea'. He has compelled me to put pen to paper to share a few little tricks I have learned with home brewing. I too made a capper not unlike Darryl's, but now it sits in the corner of my shed collecting dust. All my old king brown beer bottles have been sent to the recycler as well. A friend of mine convinced me to **BOTTLE MY BREW IN PLASTIC SOFT DRINK BOTTLES** (it took quite a while), and I have never looked back. The beer maintains all of its flavour, unless you use a bottle that has had a passionfruit drink in it.

Ask your friends to save all their soft drink bottles for you. Don't wash them, just screw the cap on until you are ready to use them. No more hot water rinsing or sterilisation, just wash them out with clean cold water when you are ready to bottle your brew. If you have ever had a glass bottle explode, you know how much mess it is to clean up. With plastic, this has never happened to me. Capping is now as simple as screwing the lid on. Another little trick is, when putting the sugar in the bottle put a small pinch of gelatin in the bottle; this ties the sediment together and the bottle can be laid on its side in the fridge or Esky. You never have to drink a cloudy brew again. Using plastic reduces bottling time by half, and you know what that means. More time to enjoy the fruits of our labour.

Robbo,
Airly via SALE, Vic.

Dear GR,

A **TRIP TO THE BIG SMOKE** (Sydney) is like a trip to hell with all the choking acrid sulphur fumes thrown in for free. How do people live there? Why? After years of living in the bush with fresh air, fresh rainwater, fresh vegetables, I can't believe that I lived there for most of my life.

I visited friends at their workplaces, the offices where I once worked, all in neat rows at their desks like battery hens in a chookery, morbid, sullen, bored, sad faces as far as the eye could see. Good god this was once me!

The air in the offices in the bland multistorey buildings was even more suffocating than the air in the streets outside – hot, musty, humid, chemical smells. That wasn't air – just chemicals. Where was the oxygen to make their brains function?

Another building, more old workmates, but I was gagging at the 'aromas' of the foul office air. 'Are you OK?' said the old workpal I hadn't seen for 25 years. 'No,' I gasped. 'I'll see you later.'

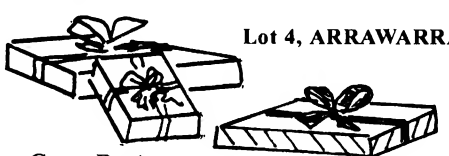
Into the lift that smelled like something rotting, and away – never to return. What a nightmare. What a shame. 'You get huge salaries for working in Sydney,' crowed one friend on day leave from the North Shore Hospital cancer ward and chemotherapy regime. Another friend who made a fortune can't talk at all because he's got no tongue – another cancer victim, cancer of the mouth, throat and so on. 'Very common,' another friend confided in a stoic way. 'One in four is the ratio usually. There are hot spots of course, near main roads and so on.'

'Real estate values have tripled since you left for the bush,' giggled one 'friend' not noted for his kind remarks. Was he trying to say I was a clown for deserting the money making machine? Well, whatever happened to the basic needs for life on earth: fresh air, fresh water, fresh food?

Cities are more like toxic waste dumps to me, where you can ponce around in your amazing BMW, Merc and so on, sure, but with your chemotherapy drip in your veins as you drive.

Am I sorry I left the city? Am I sorry I left all the hype, glamour, harbour views, sporty ladies, fast cars? Now I have peace, solitude, nature in all its amazing multitude, the clean air, the lovely wholesome crunchy fresh vegies, the crisp fresh water. I have myself, the self I had never known in the city. And my good health. Aaahh, this is the life.

Roberino,
Lot 4, ARRAWARRA BEACH 2456.



Dear Grass Roots,

May I begin by saying thank you for printing my last Feedback letter and for including a feature in the Round the Market Place page of your June/July issue on my small furniture business product. There was some helpful response. If anyone is interested, you can look up my Web address: www.islandwebs.com.au/cygnet – look for Magenta Ridge subsection.

Yes, my neighbours very kindly set up this Web site for me. We're thinking about doing more by seeking out other similar small local businesses later, maybe to form a useful register with an emphasis on ecological sustainability.

Presently, however, I am principally occupied with owner building home improvements. The current phase of work I'm doing on my place involves about 40 lineal metres of wall cladding onto typical dry hardwood stud framing. The **FERRO CEMENT CLADDING** technique I'm using is basically my own invention, adapted from the techniques used in *Ferro Cement Water Tanks and Their Construction*, by SB Watt.

John Fiotakis,
Magenta Ridge, WATTLE GROVE 7109.

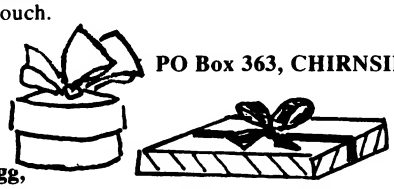
FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR & Readers,

I have been a GR reader for the last 13 years on and off (mostly on!). I make use of many ideas, even though my son and I live in a unit practically in the centre of Brisbane. I believe it is the 'mind-set' of GR folk which keeps me coming back, and is the reason for this letter. For some time now I have endeavoured to gather volunteers to help me with **SEWING TINY SMOCKED GOWNS FOR STILLBORN BABIES** at the hospital where I work. It is tragic that there is a continuous need for these gowns, however, extending sympathy to bereaved parents by providing something for their baby is enormously beneficial. It seems like a very small effort to me, but I notice that my volunteers don't have an ongoing commitment to this project as I do. So if there should happen to be any GR folk out there who are handy with needle and thread and can smock, or are interested in learning, please drop me a line. I am finding that the job is too much alone. Many hands make light work, so hopefully some like-minded GR people will help if they can.

To **LISA COOPER:** Where are you my dear old penpal? I believe it's eight years since I first wrote to you out of GR. Please get in touch.

Frances,
PO Box 363, CHIRNSIDE SOUTH 4032.



Hi Megg,

I'd like to thank those people who swapped seeds with me – I now have a huge collection and am running out of space in my garden to try them all. I'm still after a few though, like white radishes, wattles (with edible seed), beetroot, onions and chives. I have heaps of spare tomatoes and lettuce to swap.

I've been on an **ELIMINATION DIET** for about a month (no eggs, dairy, wheat, sugar and a few other things). I've managed to find a few good books from the library, but am still after recipes for snack foods (slices and cakes) and nondairy alternatives in common recipes. I've also been reading the book, *The Eat Right Diet*, which proposes that people should have a diet based on their blood type. It sounds very intriguing and I plan to give it a go next, (although some of my favourite things are on the avoid list). Any O blood type people out there following the diet (particularly vegetarians) who'd like to swap notes and recipes?

A question for the gardeners out there: **ARE BEAN LEAVES EDIBLE**? Do they have any side effects and can they be used like silverbeet?

I'm still looking to correspond/meet up with people from the Mudgee/Gulgong area in NSW. I'm a weekend farmer there about once a month. At other times I'm in Brisbane and would like to meet up with keen vegie gardeners or people following a more natural way of life.

To get a thick fruit smoothie, add some ground rice.

What's an easy method to get sunflower seeds out of their shell?

Fiona,
email: quest@powerup.com.au
PO Box 399, EVERTON PARK 4053.



Dear GRs,

Hi, my name is Michael and I **COLLECT BUSINESS CARDS** from Australia/overseas. I would like to be sent any business cards from Australia/overseas please. Also willing to swap.

Michael,
PO Box 2783, MT GAMBIER 5290.

Dear GR,

I am writing a book on **HEALING WITH FOODS AND HERBS** to sell at our local Bellingen organic market. I am already selling the herbs as teas to heal. Recently I came across two plants that I can find very little information on and wondered if anyone could possibly know about them. They are **SHOO FLY** and **TUTTI FRUTTI**. I wondered also, in this age of technology, if you would consider having an email pen friend section as well. As I find this method of letter writing wonderful and fast. If anyone would like to correspond this way, let me know.

Also, I have some bok choy seeds from my organic paradise – send stamped envelope or swap from your seeds. Does anyone know if watermelons and rock melons grown up a bamboo structure will support themselves. Also, as far as my research can tell there is actually no nutritional value in chokos, if anyone knows different please let me know. If there are any women who would like to know how to cut rust out of their own car, it's so easy, they can contact me for easy instructions.

Black Crow Walking,
1709 Darkwood Rd, THORA 2454.
Blackcro@turboweb.net.au

According to 'What Food Is That? and How Healthy Is It?' chokos contain 6 mg vitamin C per 80 g serve. Compare this with oranges which can contain up to 35 mg vitamin C per 100 g serve.

Dear Grass Roots,

I am another desperate sufferer of **MULTIPLE CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY** (see GR134) and it's almost reached the 'bubble' stage. As my illness is associated with severe chronic fatigue syndrome, I am not able to offer physical help in return for rent etc, and I'm on a disability pension. If I could improve a bit more I would like to do some writing – former profession – though you'd never guess it now (cognitive difficulties). This letter is mainly for any ideas, suggestions, shoe-string budget solutions, because I don't know how much longer I can survive unless I get clean air etc. I've struggled hard for 15 years. Allergies have only been appalling for past three years. I am now in my 50s and have lost first my house then a rental purchase property and would hate to have to sell my furniture, basic but what I need, as most are family history pieces I could not replace. There is a 20 year old car which needs garaging and it's vital I'm near public health, particularly dental facilities.

So long as I get the right conditions I can cope independently. I am very quiet and self-sufficient, not in any condition to share close quarters, but adaptable, have lived in many different places. Ideally, I'd fancy a move to Tasmania, but have heard even there is not good for allergy sufferers because of cropping. Cost and logistics would probably stop me at any rate. Sunshine Coast hinterland? How is it for the worst summer months?

(Ms) Bobbie McCrea,
C/- PO Box 545, LUTWYCHE 4030.

Dear Grass Roots,

May I say thank you to all the folks who came to my rescue with patterns of rugs. Think I have replied to all except one; have mislaid her covering letter and envelope. It was (the pattern) headed Pineapple Rug and went into a lot of detail. Have made the rug and it was a great success; sold on our nursing home stall before it was finished; have now started another one which we will raffle later.

Marion Elliott,
6 Coast Ave, CRONULLA 2230.

Dear Megg & Mary,

I am looking for someone to help me. About 6 to 12 months ago Anne Marie Keatley had a letter in GR saying she had a recipe for **PRESERVING GINGER**. I wrote to her but she had left the address given. I wonder if someone may have got this recipe from Anne Marie or may have another recipe for this purpose. I would dearly love to be able to do my own.

Mavis Barry,
12 Marlin Ave, TIN CAN BAY 4580.

EARTH FLOORS

by John Mount, Woodford, Qld.

Dirt floors of nearly any type can be made hard by manual compaction or the continual application of water. The dirt floor, if it is virgin soil (that is, undisturbed soil which is solid to the touch), may only need levelling with a square-nosed shovel. It is then swept clear of loose particles and sprinkled with a fine spray of water. The surface must be saturated with water until it can retain no more and the water should be seen lying thinly on the surface. After watering, it takes around 12 hours for the earth to be dry enough to walk on, providing all doors and windows have been left open to take advantage of sunlight and warm breezes. It should finally set hard like adobe mud brick! Some like to sprinkle lime across the surface before watering, saying this not only helps to harden the dirt, but will act as a disinfectant and pest repellent.

The watering process should be repeated once a week for a month or more until the required hardness is attained. After a few months when the floor begins to deteriorate from the constant wear and tear from boots and shoes, the whole process should be repeated. The occasional sprinkling with the dregs from teapots and then sweeping afterwards when dry is said to prolong the hardness of dirt floors.

In central and western Asia, carpets were placed over beaten-earth floors. In fact, from time immemorial in some parts of Asia, carpets have been used to cover the floors of tents, houses, mosques and palaces.

During late medieval times, castles were designed according to military rather than aesthetic values. The main hall, which was really a large room, was built with timber or stone walls (sometimes plastered), an open-beamed roof, narrow slit windows (unglazed), and a floor of stone slabs, tiles, or beaten earth (depending on the wealth and standing of the occupants). In the ordinary homes of the time, the fire burned in the centre of a beaten or rammed-earth floor (the heat of which would have helped to harden the floor) and the smoke either drifted through a central hole in the roof or dispersed among the rafters.

The best natural floor I've seen was an earthen floor covered with a few centimetres of fine gravel, then above that, large flat stones closely fitted together in a mosaic pattern. Water and liquids could be spilt with little concern, for they quickly disappeared down the cracks and crevices between the stones to be finally absorbed by the gravel and dirt. A few buckets of water thrown across the stones completed the weekly floor-washing drudge.

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BURIED TREASURE
A SEEPAGE PIT SAGA

by Ian Brothers, Grenfell, NSW.

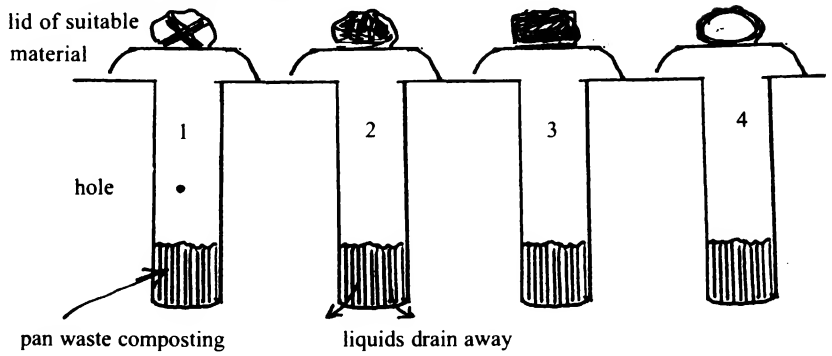
Living in the back blocks brings one much closer to the soil – the 'night soil' that is. Soon after we built our new home, 'I'm not travelling up the paddock in all weather, and the dead of night, to go to the toilet! It's time we had an indoor toilet.', was the refrain. Right. Goes against the grain, but even I was getting sick of flies, mozzies, jumping ants, the occasional wet toilet paper, the occasional howling wind or biting frost while sitting contemplating the meaning of life. Have you back-yard toilet-goers ever noticed how one really needs to 'go' just went the lightning starts flashing and water is bucketing down from the sky?

There is an amazing amount of infrastructure and expense involved with an indoor flushing dunny where the wastes disappear into an underworld of mystery. I marvelled at the simplicity and cost-effectiveness of using the pan toilet during those times of drought when it was sheer foolishness to flush rainwater into the septic. We had no dam handy to source water from in such emergencies. Our pan was a flyproof affair with a large plastic bucket to catch the offerings. It always had 10 – 15 centimetres of water in the bottom after cleaning out to help cut down smell and soften the wastes to a slurry for easy pouring.

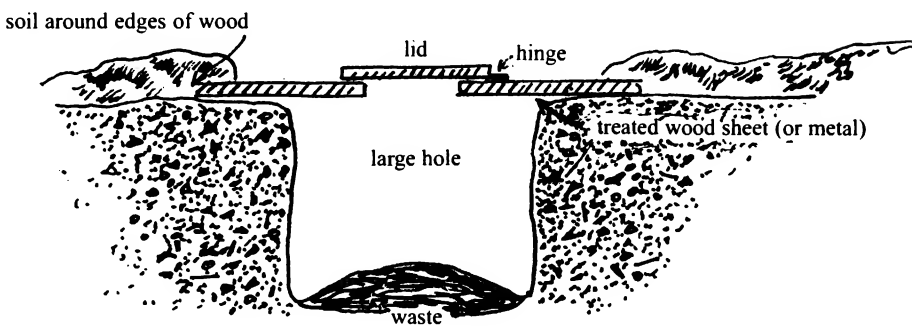
The waste from a pan toilet can be put to good use. We tipped ours down metre-deep holes in the orchard, excavated with a post-hole digger. Four holes were dug at a time, each capped with the top of a cut-down sheep drench container with its handy handle. A rock on each lid stopped them being easily dislodged. By rotating the holes to receive the waste we would get six months use before having to remove the lids and cover the holes with a short length of currugated iron. Earth was used to hold down the edges of the iron while final composting took place.

This 'travelling pit toilet' was very effective and a model of recycling. I

Orchard Waste Disposal System



Proposed Kitchen Waste Disposal System



am thinking of using a similar system for our new place for disposing of kitchen waste for compost and the occasional sani-pan when the water supply is low. This time I plan to have one hole only and use a hinged lidded setup, made of creosoted outdoor plywood.

We have a problem with mice and rats out here in the wheat belt and ordinary compost heaps are an open invitation for a nesting habitat. We must avoid this at all costs. Once final composting had taken place with our four-hole system the sides of the holes were caved in and the hole filled with soil form the original excavation. The trees loved it. If the holes are dug when the ground is soft, all the better. The idea of having one large hole is that it would be useful for years. The disadvantage of the standard pit toilet is that the wastes are not spread around where they can be of most use, in part of the food production system.

With our new home and the associated council inspections we had to take care of toilet wastes in the 'normal way', with a septic system. Our home is built on a concrete slab. The plumber put in the appropriate piping before the slab was poured. It was up to me to site the septic tank and the regulation six-metre seepage pit. We are fortunate to be a long way from any neighbour. The land slopes to give good drainage through the sandy soil, though rocks make trench digging a problem.

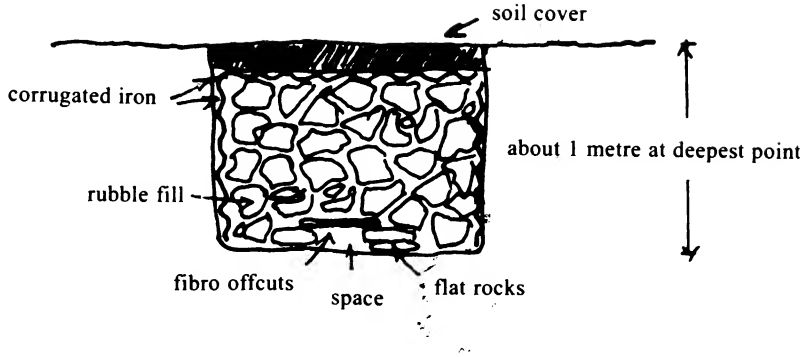
At the old homestead, where we lived just months previously there had been no attempt to construct a proper seepage pit for the septic outflow. Over the years the sides and the top of the pit had collapsed in to fill all the spaces

between the rocks of the rubble fill. I had to dig it all out to make the toilet work properly. Ever notice how the toilet always plays up in this sort of situation, just when you are expecting a bevy of guests? Our new seepage pit was going to be a world-class model, a benchmark for future generations; something to thrill archaeologists who would wonder at the strange burial rites of late 20th century man. Move over Tutankhamen!

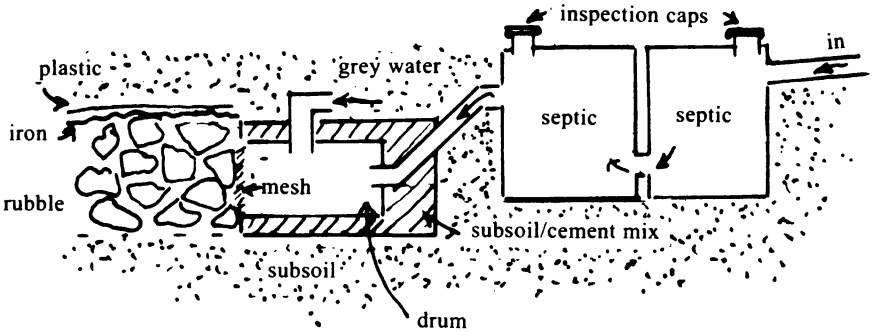
Our septic tank is a double-chambered device made of heavy duty plastic; two cylinders stuck together. It had to be relatively small as we have no great depth in the rocky soil near the house. The tank came from South Australia via an agent in Parkes NSW. It was relatively easy to get on the ute, transport home, and slip into the levelled hole all by myself. The new seepage pit was definitely overdone in its girth and length, zigzagging down the slope to avoid immovable rock outcrops. The top of the far end of the pit was below the level of the septic outflow pipe, and at ground level. This is so that if it gets extremely wet (and we can get tonnes of water seeping down from the granite range behind the house) we will still be able to flush the toilet without water backup in the seepage pit stopping the flow.

Our grey water pipe, carrying water waste from the shower and various sinks, bypasses the septic tank. Septic tanks are digesters powered by various microbes which break down the wastes and toilet paper. Nothing must go into the septic tank which could endanger the environment for these helpful tiny critters. No chemical cleaning substances should be used in the toilet bowl. Plain water is all that is needed to regularly clean the bowl and seat. Don't fall for the advertising hype that you should use germ-killing agents in your toilet. For hygiene reasons? Good grief, we don't drink or eat out of the bowl, nor let children and flies play in it. The use of antibiotics by people could theoretically affect the fermentation rate in the septic tank. I haven't a clue if this will adversely affect the tank's operation to a great degree. Does anyone have any reliable information regarding this? Please share it.

Rubble - Filled Seepage Pit



Double - Chambered Septic System



The septic outlet and grey water pipes first empty into a large drum with the open end covered in wire mesh to stop rocks falling in when rubble was placed in the drain. The drum was cemented in place by an 8:1 subsoil/cement mix; so even if the drum rusts away the open chamber will still be there. The seepage pit was lined on the sides and top with old sheets of corrugated iron that were badly dinted but still had plenty of life in them. Being underground, the rate of corrosion should be extremely slow in this 600 mm rainfall area. A rubble of granite rocks of all shapes and sizes filled the trench before the cover sheets of iron were placed. The top was then covered with sheets of plastic (in our case thin stuff, doubled over, which had once served as painting drop sheets), and the whole then covered with plenty of soil to allow grass cover eventually. There will be no gross movement of soil silting up the spaces between rocks in this pit. To ensure plenty of water could flow through the bottom of the pit a space was created by placing relatively flat bits of rock on the bottom and spanning them with fibro offcuts.

The expense involved in the seepage pit was minimal. The effort was great but regarded as a long-term investment. Tree roots making use of the organic soup of the outflow should never enter and clog the pipes and will be all the more healthy for the natural fertiliser. Perhaps we should plant some fruit trees near the pit.

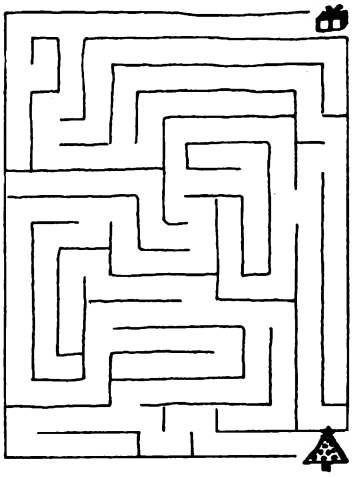
In NSW local councils are now required to have a register of all septic toilet systems in their shires and regularly check to see the systems are working correctly. At the time of writing there is no indication of how much septic tank owners will have to pay for these inspections. I suppose it is for the good of all that these inspections go ahead, however, I'm sure there is room for abuse with councils inspecting too frequently as a method of revenue raising. I wonder if the legislation covers this?

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KIDS PAGE

Christmas Tree Maze

Can you put the present under the Christmas tree?



Christmas Bookmarks



These Christmas theme bookmarks make great presents for family and friends.

You will need:

- ★ cardboard
- ★ ribbon
- ★ scissors
- ★ hole punch
- ★ coloured pencils

Cut cardboard into a rectangular shape (16 cm long and 6 cm wide) for each bookmark.
Make a hole at the top narrow end.
Decorate the entire shape with a Christmas motif, such as an angel, Santa, Christmas tree.
Place a piece of ribbon (about 24 cm long) into the hole and tie into a bow.

But What Is Boxing Day?

In Australia and some other countries, Christmas Day is always followed by another traditional holiday - Boxing Day. But what exactly is Boxing Day? Well, traditionally it is on this day that the alms box at every Anglo Saxon-based Church is opened and the contents distributed to the poor.

Ways to Say Merry Christmas

Here is how you would say 'merry Christmas' if you celebrated Christmas in one of the following countries.

Buon Natale - Italy
Salamet Hari Natal - Indonesia
Joyeux Noel - France
Eftihismena Christougenna - Greece
Shinnen Omedeto - Japan

Maybe you know someone from one of these countries - try giving Christmas wishes in their language.

Edible Delights



These chocolate wreaths are very delicious. Make them as gifts or include them in your Christmas Day feast.

Christmas Fruit Nut Wreaths

You will need:

- ★ 250 g good chocolate
- ★ a few handfuls of several kinds of nuts, such as slivered almonds, pecans macadamias, brazil (if you like, you may lightly toast them)
- ★ a handful of chopped dried apricots, dates, raisins
- ★ a large greaseproof paper-lined tray
- ★ a piping bag with star tube fitted

Melt the chocolate over a bowl of simmering hot water. Spoon it into a piping bag fitted with a star tube. Pipe chocolate into circles about 5 cm diameter onto baking tray. Arrange fruit and nuts on the chocolate rings while the chocloate is still soft.
Allow to cool. Store in a cool place.

Ho! Ho! Ho!

What do Santa's elves learn at school?
The Elf-abet.

What does Santa say when he walks backwards?
Oh! Oh! Oh!

What do you call a cat on the beach at Christmas time?
Sandy Claus.

Why does Santa go down the chimney on Christmas Eve?
Because it soots him.

IN THE KITCHEN

Christmas is a time for sharing. In this issue last year *Grass Roots* staff shared some of their favourite festive season recipes. This time we present some readers' recipes for you to try. They are equally suitable for Christmas Day or for any occasion during the holiday season.

EASY GUACAMOLE

Guacamole is a famous Mexican dish and the perfect easy entrée or appetiser for even the hottest of Aussie summer days.

2 large ripe avocadoes
1 small lemon
salt & pepper to taste
1 large onion, diced
1 large sprig parsley, finely chopped
1 green chilli or capsicum, finely chopped

Mash avocado pulp to a smooth paste. Add remaining ingredients, stir and serve immediately. The onion gives your taste buds a wonderfully cool, crunchy surprise. Guacamole can be served as a dip or spread on slices of toast or Indian flat bread.

Trev Wilkins

UKRANIAN BEETROOT SALAD

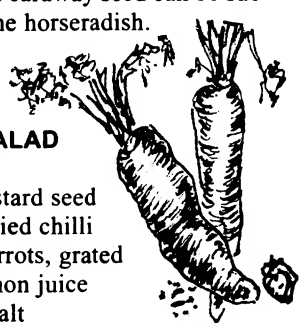
Can be prepared the day before use.

3 – 4 medium beetroots, cooked in skins then peeled and grated

Mix in the following:

2 tbsp white wine vinegar, or cider vinegar
1½ tbsp raw sugar
1 tbsp grated horseradish pickle, or horseradish cream
salt & white pepper to taste

Check for taste and add more of the above flavourings to suit yourself. A tablespoon of caraway seed can be substituted for the horseradish.



CARROT SALAD

2 tsp oil
½ tsp mustard seed
1 small dried chilli
3 large carrots, grated
2 tbsp lemon juice
pinch of salt

Heat oil and fry mustard seeds till they pop. Add chilli and then the grated carrot. Remove from heat. Add lemon juice and salt. Remove the chilli before serving at room temperature. For variation, add a pinch of asafoetida instead of the mustard seed.

Sonia Groen & Ian Brothers

COLD VEGETABLE BAKE

This recipe is very adaptable and can utilise any available vegetables. It's suitable for Christmas (or any other) luncheon on a very hot day as it can be prepared the day before.

300 g pumpkin, peeled & sliced lengthways
15 firm ripe tomatoes, approx
fresh basil
black pepper
block of cheese, your preference
2 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp wine vinegar
1 tsp mustard

Line a shallow dish with cling wrap, leaving enough wrap hanging over to cover top of dish. Set aside. Cut pumpkin into slices 1 cm thick to fit shape of dish. There should be enough for a single layer. Lightly brush pumpkin with olive oil and place on a baking tray. Bake in moderate oven 20 – 30 minutes, or until pumpkin is cooked but firm. Allow to cool.

Cut tomatoes in half lengthways and press gently with an eggslice to flatten. Cut cheese into slices 6 mm thick. Layer the ingredients – tomatoes skin side down, lightly seasoned with pepper; cheese; a few basil leaves. Repeat this order once, then top with pumpkin before layering again with basil, tomatoes and cheese. Repeat until casserole dish is full.

Cover dish with overhanging clingwrap, then use inverted lid of dish to put pressure on the ingredients. Refrigerate overnight.

Just before serving, gently remove the chilled casserole onto a wider flat plate by uncovering the clingwrap on top, lying the flat plate across the casserole dish and turning it upside down. This can be decorated with holly leaves before placing on the table.

Prepare mustard dressing by placing the last three ingredients in a screw-top jar and shaking well. Serve slices of the dish on a bed of lettuce with dressing drizzled over each slice.

Bette Shiels

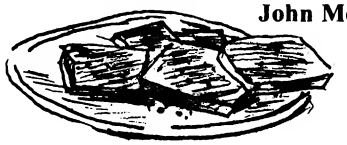
MELON FRUIT SALAD

This quantity serves two, adjust to suit your needs. It makes a very refreshing finish to any summer meal.

1 small melon, honeydew or other
1 pineapple
¼ cucumber
1 stick celery
1 red eating apple
60 ml unsweetened orange juice
fresh mint leaves for decoration

Cut melon in half and scoop out flesh with an implement to form balls. Save skin shells. Form cucumber into balls also. Slice celery thinly. Core and dice apple. Combine all prepared fruits and vegetables into a large bowl. Add juice. Spoon salad into reserved skins and decorate with mint leaves. If you prefer your desserts a little sweeter, add some honey or sugar to the orange juice.

John Mount



PAPARELLE

This recipe was handed on to me by a lovely 80 year old Italian lady. It's a delicious biscuit to serve with coffee. It keeps very well and I send it to my family in their Christmas hampers.

Combine in a large bowl:
2 cups plain flour
2 tsp baking powder
2 cups chopped dates
2 cups whole almonds
1 tsp ground cinnamon
2 sticks cinnamon, ground up

Combine in a small bowl:
4 eggs
1½ cups caster sugar
2 tsp vanilla
6 tsp butter, melted

Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and mix well. Spread out onto a well-greased and lined 40 x 25 cm baking tray. Cook at 180° C for 25 minutes Cool in tin. Slice into pieces 1 cm thick, wrap in foil and refrigerate overnight. Place the pieces, separated, on a tray and cook at 160° C for another 25 minutes. Enjoy!

Paula Colins

THE SILVER STRING



by Pam Cole, Tuncurry, NSW.



It's not much to look at now, nearly 60 years later, but The Silver String was a miracle to behold when two little bush girls watched open-mouthed and shiny-eyed as it was unwrapped. Our pretty youngest aunt had sent it, the one who lived somewhere near Melbourne and had all the latest fashions of 1939 – 40 (sleeves puffed at the shoulder, dirndl skirts, tight waists with a vee point in front, toe-peeper shoes). Mother folded back the nest of tissue paper and drew out a string of silvery baubles. A little note from Aunty Het told us she'd sent this pretty tree decoration because, 'Who knows, with war so near we may not see this kind of thing again'. Although we were only six and four we knew what she meant. We'd lived our infant lives on a dusty dry wheat farm in north-west NSW, but now our dad was gone for a soldier and we were to move into the little nearby town. Everything seemed unsettled and insecure, like the feeling in the air before a storm. And now here was this magical otherworldly gift, a string of silvery glass beads to deck a Christmas tree; from it dangled silver bells and stars that swung and shimmered in the baking December heat.

It's difficult to express nowadays the special quality of Christmas in our childhood days. There was no TV or VCR and our occasional trips to the picture show were usually to view black and white films, with technicolour being a rarity. There was not a hint of the long-drawn buildup of advertising for the event assailing the eye and ear. Spectacular sights in our experience consisted of such things as a street parade on Anzac Day with the 'Scotchie band' swirling by to a skirl of bagpipes, or the sight of rainbows, frost, a river in flood, the theatrical displays of dry electrical storms, watching breathlessly for the sun to dance as it rose on Easter morning. So the impact of the festive season, which began with Christmas Eve and ended after Boxing Day, was powerful. It provided once-a-year tastes, sounds, and experiences.

The season began with the devotedly pencilled letter to Santa Claus which, once written (and read by a parent 'to see if it's nicely written, that's all; no, no! I wouldn't dream of reading what you've got on your list'), was popped into the fire of the kitchen stove to whirl off in the smoke to wherever that benign gentleman lived. Yes, benign was right. Santa's involvement with the smarty-pants creators of horror movies and the exploitations of the advertising world had not yet been dreamed of. Once Christmas beetles with their irridescent backs and stomach-churning clinging feet had been spotted in the stubble of the wheat paddock or hooked to the bark of a eucalypt, we knew the magic had begun. The excitement of coming events was behind our fervent whisperings to the whiskery white thistledowns called 'Santa's messengers', which we believed carried our gift wishes, and one of which we leapt to catch, but not crush, before blowing it on its way with our secrets.

On Christmas Eve we were reminded by our elders of the birth of the Baby Jesus, and there were carols and quiet talk as they tried to keep us calm,



Giggling with friends and cousins for the festive photo on the next-door farm. Pam and her younger sister are in white.

but the thrills were mounting. Mum opened the old hatbox so we could rat around among the carefully saved wrapping papers and our few decorations. Up went the paper chains and twisted streamers with the fold-out paper bell with its honeycombed surface. We scurried off to wrap things in the smoothed-out paper, or to get busy on cards – hand-painted or crayoned. An excess of seasonal goodwill made the two of us splurge on glorious violet and crimson lake, using our hoarded best colours even for one another's cards! There was always a marvellous expedition with Dad to select the tree, a she-oak from the riverside or a gum tree branch, to be carted home and decorated with tinsel and cellophane.

A wonderful moment was waking up to rummage in the pillowcase tied to the foot of our bed. First came the stocking of stiff red net (same as every year: little tin scales and patty tin which we used for mud pies, a bucking bronco puzzle, a cardboard trumpet with a froth of shredded paper streamers, funny little lollies deep in the toe), then a toy or two lumping out the bottom corners of the pillowcase. 'Joy To The World' would burst from our crackly old battery-powered wireless as we rose and dressed, choked down a mouthful or two of porridge, and rushed back to play with the new things, quite ignoring our poor mum who was already busy with the kitchen stove. What a labour of love that baked dinner must have been; women all over Australia stoking up the firebox to spend a morning of infernal heat over a woodstove in December's spitfire weather! Then to dress in our best for church, and back to glorious smells of that rich baked dinner, with roast fowl (as chicken was known in those days) and the grown-up feeling of sitting at the table set with all Mum's best things.

At Christmas and at Easter only did we have chicken; for mutton-fed country folk of those times it was a special festive food. Only at Christmas did we have fruit salad containing expensive items like cherries or pineapple, and plum pudding too was a once-a-year taste. Whoever got the wishbone (this, we knew, was decided by sheer magic as the parents were every bit as surprised as we) had to crack it with a chosen partner. Both people wished and the one drawing the longest leg of wishbone would have their wish come true. With the pudding sheer luck and magic once again prevailed (we didn't for one minute think of parental connivance in anything Christmassy). You might find yourself doomed to a year of solitude with the discovery of the bachelor's button, or find true love with the heart, thrift with the thimble, or riches with the threepenny bit. After this, we attacked the box of muscatels and the bowl piled high with nuts, for which purpose one of the children's Christmas jobs always was shining up the bowl and the nutcrackers with good old Silvo polish. The walnuts and almonds we could manage to crack, but Dad's help was enlisted for those devilish tricky monkey nuts (today's macadamias) and the exotic wood-encased Brazils – again, once-a-year tastes! These were spiced with the inaccurate assurance from our romantically minded father that they, like the muscatels and dates we munched with them, came from strange countries with jungles and savage tribes and palm-treed deserts.

Wash up then and rest – not difficult with full stomachs and the midsummer heat belting on the tin roof like a great bronze hammer. In the evening was the enjoyment of a tiny gift each from the tree and a tea of delicious leftovers, and carols and churchy talk and the King's Speech on the old wireless, in our little farmouse under a hot black sky full of blazing stars.

Ever since, our family have followed these rituals, and my sister and I carried much of it over into our own homes later. There have been additions and changes of course: exchange students and friends from overseas introduced us to Dutch *spekulaas*, Danish *nisse*, Finnish red caps adorned with sleigh bells, Pennsylvania Dutch cookies, and so on, which have been incorporated into our Christmas carry-on. Some years we celebrated Christmas at an aunt's beach house with all our relations, the elders getting misty-eyed over toasts to Absent Friends, and we small cousins giggling and squabbling and sleeping in bunks gritty with sea-sand. Others were spent on the farm next door, all the kids tucked into a huge bed on the verandah, ears stretched in vain to hear the crunch of Santy's boots or the whizzing of his sleigh overhead.

The Silver String was prized above all decorations, despite the 'improvements' over the years. With grown children travelling and leaving home, the tree was often decked and admired long before the last wanderer rolled in. 'Save some of the tree for me to do,' was the plea. Thus, it became a tradition for the Silver String to be kept aside and added by the last one home. Nowadays it's a ghost of its former self. Over the years bits have broken or been lost, and for a long while its appearance has been that of a long white string threading cheap silvery glass beads, a star of foil and cardboard, one remaining bell whose papier-mache shows through its shiny coating, and a replacement yellow bead which once long ago dangled around Mum's crochet milk-jug cover. It's as light as one of those thistledown Santas, but heavily loaded with precious dreams and memories. Thanks Aunty Het for adding that touch of frivolity to our war-worried childhood. And despite such difficult days of drought, depression and wartime worries, thanks Mum and Dad for all the magic you created around us.

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BOOMERANG PILLOWCASES
EASY GIFTS TO MAKE

by Pamela Odijk, Bribie Island, Qld.

Looking for a gift that is inexpensive to make, will suit most people for most occasions, is useful, decorative, can be personalised and safely sent in the mail? Then boomerang pillows and/or cases may be your answer. They are also a good idea for a market stall item as those available in stores are very expensive.

I made everyone these for Christmas one year, some I had professionally embroidered with names or initials (because I am hopeless at this art), and on those for children, I appliqued their names with contrasting material. Names in red and white check on red pillows. The kids loved them. They use them in their rooms, on the lounge room floor when watching TV, and take them with them in the car and to the beach. For an elderly lady I made a matching apron, also with her initial embroidered on it. I attached a note to the pillowcase which read 'FOR RESTING' and another on the apron which read 'FOR WORKING'. She thought it was wonderful.

Instead of paying postage to send the accompanying huge pillows through the mail, for those who received pillows and cases as gifts, I simply attached a cheque and card, asking the recipients to please buy a pillow as the cost of posting one would be equal to its cost anyway.

If you intend having the covers embroidered, it is better to have this done before you sew the pieces together. Professional embroidery is relatively inexpensive – I paid $2 for each initial. And it's a good idea to overlock the edge so it will not fray while the embroidery is being done. If you have the time and can embroider names, initials, quotations, sayings, this will add to the gift's originality. For embroidery services, look in the yellow pages of your local telephone directory.

Figure 1

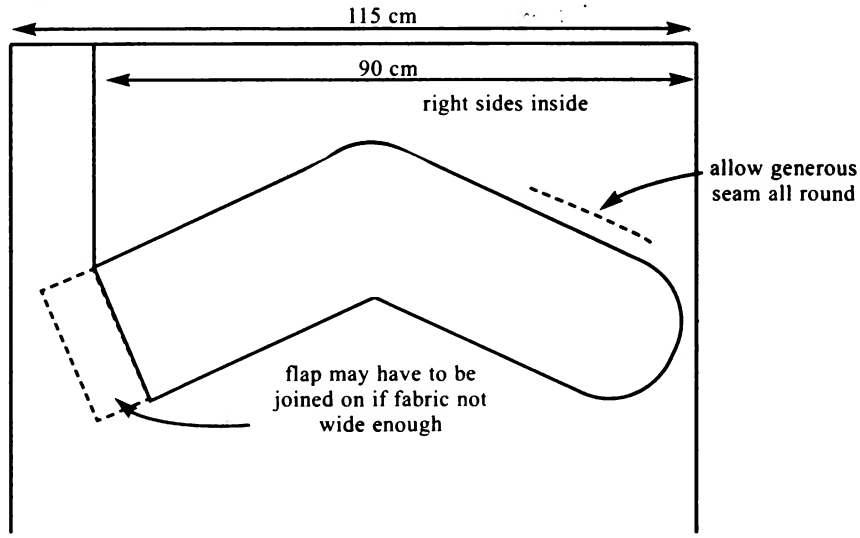
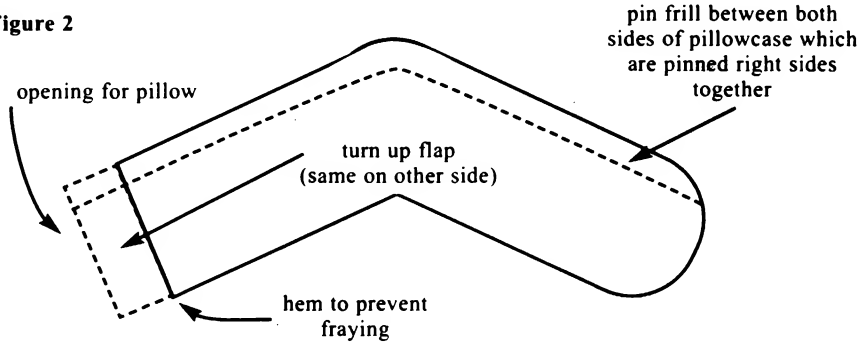


Figure 2



MATERIALS NEEDED

(for two pillowcases)

- 4 metres 115 cm wide material or 90 cm wide.

With 90 cm wide you will need to join a larger piece to make the inside flap which holds the pillow in its case. Cotton/poplin is ideal and inexpensive.

- matching cotton
- a purchased pillow or pillowcase to use as a pattern and as a guide for size.

Lay the pillow flat and trace around it on brown paper or butcher's paper and use this as a basic pattern shape.

PROCEDURE

Cases

Fold the material in half horizontally with right sides inside.

Pin the paper outline or case you are using as a pattern on the fabric. Allow 120 cm extra length to the open edge. This is to allow for a flap which is turned up to keep the pillow inside the case. Allowing 50 – 60 cm all around (to enable the bulky pillow to be inserted), cut out the pillowcase through both thicknesses of material (see fig 1). You can allow a little more than 50 –

60 cm, just in case the material shrinks in the wash.

Cut a second pillowcase in the same way.

Pleated Frill

From the remainder of the material cut (or tear, as most fabrics will tear straight across the grain) strips 130 cm wide, or twice the size of the desired frill size.

Join these strips together. About 2½ – 3 strips is sufficient for one pillowcase frill. Any extra can be cut off when the frill is pinned in place.

Press these long strips in half, right side out.

Sewing Up

If you intend taking the case for embroidering, overlock around the outside of piece to be embroidered. It is a good idea to pin a note with a safety pin in the exact place where you want the embroidery to go, stating exactly what is to be embroidered and the colour. Remember that the cases have been cut with the right sides of the material inside.

Pleat the frill by hand, a little at a time, as you sew along the raw edges with the sewing machine. This does a better job than a ruffler attachment.

Pin the frill between the two pillowcase pieces, pinning through all the raw edges – frill and cases. Turn in a little hem at the beginning and end of the frill length (cut off the excess) to prevent it fraying. The frill fits along the top of the pillow only. Don't try to put it all the way round. Apart from being a difficult operation, it makes the pillow uncomfortable to sleep on.

Join on the pieces for the flap and hem these to prevent fraying.

Turn the amount allowed for the flap up on the outside (wrong side of the material) of your work and pin this in place as well, while you are pinning the frill (see fig 2).

Pin the remainder of the edges together. Turn the case right side out at this stage to make sure everything is correctly positioned and that nothing is caught.

Sew around the raw edges twice. This is important, as considerable strain is put in the seams when getting the boomerang-shaped pillow in and out of its case. Be careful that you do not catch the top edge of the frill as you turn a corner. Then overlock the raw edges together all round. Turn the pillowcase right side out. Press.

Make the second one. Easy isn't it?



Some completed pillows with embroidered initials. Fabric paints could be used instead of embroidery.

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AMAZING MACHINES

by Lloyd Perkins, Huskisson, NSW.

A couple of years ago I bought a hand-mill from Retsel, fitted it up on an exercise bike, and am using it to make stone-ground flour. I have another machine completed to a degree where it is usable for some of the tasks I designed it for, but there is still work to do to make it completely universal (to operate a broken down electric washing machine, for instance), but it is well on the way. The photos show how my amazing machines look.

Right: This is a Retsel stone-ground, hand-operated flour mill mounted on a discarded exercise bike. It is simple to make and use. The bike's wheel was left there, as I intend taking a belt from it to a car alternator to see if it will produce enough revs to charge a car battery.

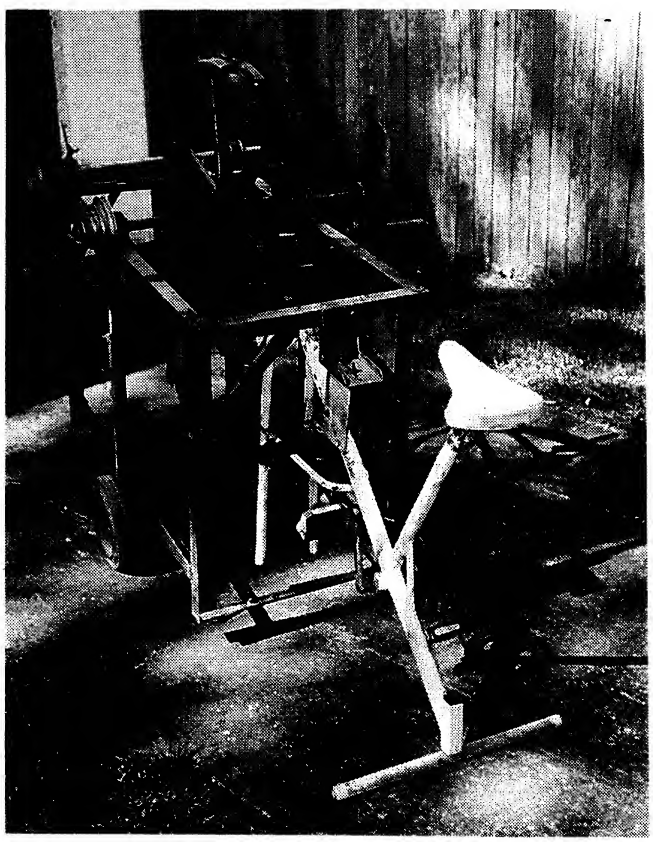


Below: This machine (not yet complete) is designed to do many jobs. It is designed to operate a sensitive or press drill, a bandsaw, a lathe, a circular saw, a router, a fretsaw, a washing machine, a metal press, and any other to which it can be adapted. The fly wheel is an old tractor wheel weighing something like 45 kilograms. It has retractable wheels which lift the whole machine to make it easy to move to any new position. The drive from pedals to fly wheel has a free-wheel device. So far, not including labour, it has cost me $95 to build; all materials were bought at the local tip.

Note the adjustable handle on the fly wheel shaft. It is there for use when very heavy work is being done. It also has a removable/exchangeable boss (quick release), which allows the machine to be driven in reverse.



Below: The wheels down in the extended position. The wheels have roller races, making it easy to shift into any position where it is needed to operate other equipment.



GARDEN BOUNTY

Lavender

by Cheryl Beasley, Karalee, Qld.

Lavender is a must in the home beauty garden. It encourages bees to visit and pollinate other flowers and also emits a wonderful fragrance, as well as looking divine. It is a perennial that will grow in very poor soil, but needs full sun to flower well. It can be grown easily from cuttings and has beautiful grey/green leaves with small purple flowers that form clusters. The flowers and leaves dry well and the plant has antiseptic qualities.

LAVENDER HAIR RINSE

1 lt boiling water
1 cup fresh lavender

Make an infusion by pouring the boiling water over the lavender and leaving to cool completely. Strain and use after shampooing as a final rinse to correct oily hair.



LAVENDER BATH OIL

1 cup fresh lavender
750 ml sunflower oil
1 tbsp pure alcohol

Chop and bruise the lavender and add the oil and alcohol. Bottle and leave in a sunny spot for two or three weeks. Strain and repeat with fresh lavender leaves. Add two tablespoons to the running bath water.

To make a strong bath oil use two teaspoons of lavender oil in place of the lavender infusion and shake the contents well to combine. There is no need to leave the bottle in the sun if using essential oils.

LAVENDER LOTION

(with parsley)
1 cup milk
1 tbsp fresh parsley
1 tbsp fresh lavender
2 drops tincture of benzoin

Simmer the parsley and lavender in the milk gently for half an hour. Strain and cool. Add the tincture of benzoin by the drop and mix in well. Keep in the fridge and use as needed for a cool skin lotion that will help blemished skin.

LAVENDER ASTRINGENT

(oily skin)
1 cup lavender infusion
3 tbsp witch hazel

Add the witch hazel to the cool lavender infusion and keep refrigerated. Shake gently before use.

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HEAVY HORSE SAFETY

by Judy Clark, Cobargo, NSW.

There seems to be a renewed interest in the heavy horse as a working animal on small holdings, so as an addition to my article in GR129 I have jotted down a few do's and don'ts of safety around the heavy horse for beginners, plus a few tips that we have learnt ourselves from personal experience. In the main, horse safety is just plain common sense.

First, let me say that there is no such animal in any horse breed as a bomb-proof horse, and the heavy horse world is no exception. We were involved in the heavy horse field days in Laidley and Gatton in Queensland for many years and have seen the best and the worst of the breed. Our own two Clydesdale mares are a case in point. They are as different as chalk and cheese. The older mare is antisocial and runs a mile when she hears the harness rattle, but works willingly once harnessed. The younger one, only broken in to ride thus far, is what I call a hip-pocket horse, she wants to be with us wherever we are in the paddock. Even if we are working with chainsaws, she has her nose into everything. Luckily, we do not have any tree felling to do on our place otherwise she would have to be yarded for the duration of the job.

BE ALERT

Any horse can get a fright and their natural instinct is for 'flight', which is an inbred survival mechanism from when they were more of a herd animal in the wild, as brumbies still are. For this reason alone, you must be totally switched on to the possibility of any unexpected event. I always carry a sharp pocketknife with me when working the horses and have had to use it recently when a difficult situation presented itself. Cut harness is much easier to repair than injured people or animals.

When getting on or off a vehicle, always have the reins in your hands and in contact with the horse's mouth, not so tightly as to make the horse back up, but firmly enough to be able to pull it up if need be. A loose rein or one thrown in the foot-box of the vehicle is too slow to be taken up and drawn in when needed in a hurry.

A quiet and experienced horse will step back over the trace chain if it gets caught between its back legs, but you can back your horse a step to slacken the chain so it can be unhooked and replaced on the outside of the horse. Remember to always talk to your horse when making any adjustments.

Do not rely on the horse to see everything that is in front of it and step around obstacles. Because of their reduced vision, you have to be their eyes and must always look ahead of the animal to check that the way ahead is safe to proceed.

Every so often, run your eye over your outfit, from horse's nose to swindle bar and reins, to make sure nothing has come adrift with the harness and hitching points. Make it a habit for it could prevent a serious mishap. Also keep an eye on the vehicle or implement that you have your horse hitched to (watch for loose wheels, broken pieces etc).



Judy Clark and friend Faye Pope with Judy's champion heavy horse, Gypsy. Safety is of paramount importance when dealing with such large strong animals.

HARNESSING

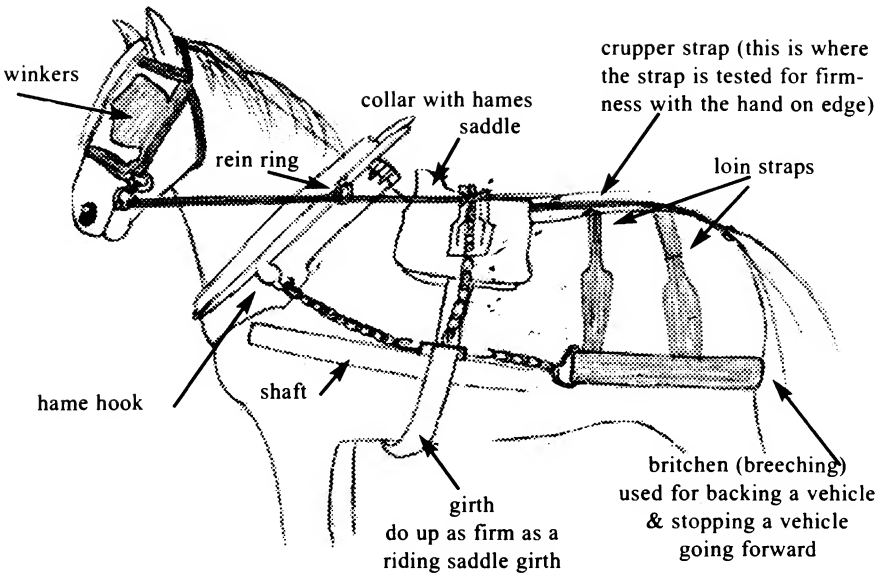
A routine that I always use for harnessing has its origins in the history of the teamsters in the old days, who believed that it was bad luck not to put the collar on first. I have never been one to tempt fate, so follow this tradition as well. One big advantage is that the horse can see what is being done with it and can see what the articles of harness are that you are putting on its back, so will not be frightened by them when it has its winkers (blinkers, or blinders) on, especially if it is new to the game.

Once the winkers are on, the horse cannot see behind it to see what is going on, so for this reason you must always talk to the horse when moving around it. Always keep in physical contact with the horse as well, with a reassuring hand, no matter what you are doing.

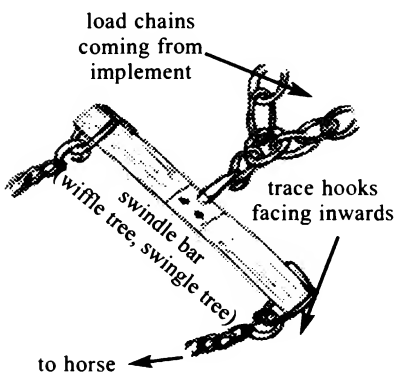
Always check your harness for any defects in the leather and stitching, when you are cleaning it and when you are putting it on. It can prevent an unexpected accident caused by the want of a few stitches. Before moving off from where you harnessed up, do a safety check to make sure that every buckle is done up and every strap is at the right firmness, and that you have not forgotten a piece of harness. This routine is mostly important when 'putting to' a vehicle. If a piece of the rig has been left unconnected, the horse would be severely injured by the shaft dropping down and giving it a fright, causing a reaction that is not a pretty sight. This is just an example of an accident waiting to happen if you do not do your gear and hitching checks before setting off on any job.

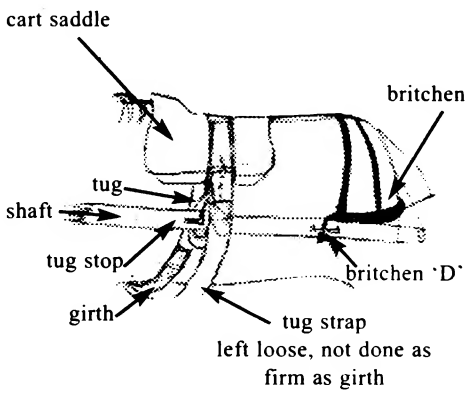
With any type of harness horse do not have any reins joined, as they can be dangerous around vehicles, farm implements and slides, and also the legs of both horse and handler. The only time that it is of a benefit to have the reins tied together is when you are ploughing and both hands are needed on the plough and your horse is a seasoned plough horse used to walking in the furrow. The reins are tied together short enough to go over your shoulder and under one arm, so that you are still in firm contact with your horse. When reins are at your feet in a cart or sulky, they can become caught up if you want to get down from the vehicles, so do

Dray Harness

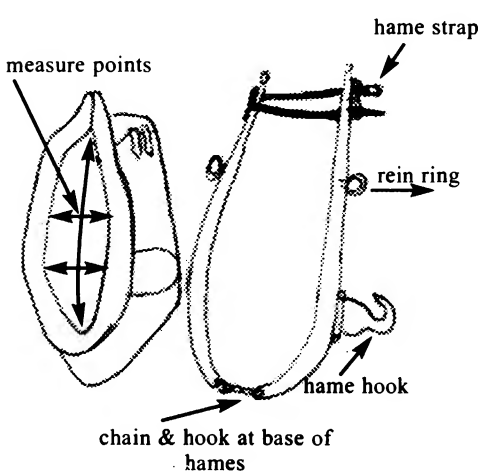


Trace Chains

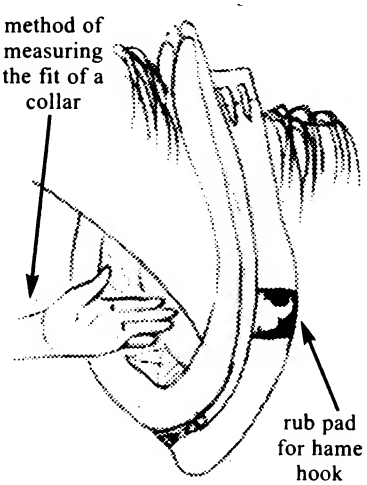




Draught Collar & Hames



Collars



not join them together. When you are long-reining (driving) from the ground, throw the excess reins over one shoulder, then they are up and away from your feet and any implement that the horse might be pulling.

When putting on the winkers, make sure that the forelock is plaited up or tied up out of the way, as it can get caught between the winkers and the horse's eyes, creating an irritation which could cause the horse to throw its head about. If using a collar (breastplates can be used on the heavy horse too), make sure the mane is not caught or pulling. A comfortable horse has its mind on the job, not on rubbing or pinching harness.

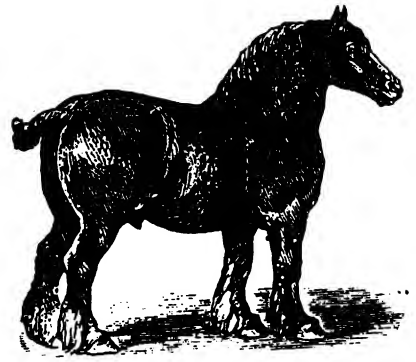
Do not use rotten or old harness that needs repairing. Keep farm implements and vehicles in good working order and oiled. Replace old wood in swindle bars, as well as shafts on vehicles. They must be sound and the wheels in good order too.

COLLARS

In the old days a horse was never sold without its own collar, and sometimes its own winkers, because these were made to fit the horse. When buying harness for your horse and you cannot afford a new collar made to fit, you can manage quite well with a second-hand collar, so long as you take a few measurements. The length of the collar is measured, from the inside at the top where it comes together to the inside at the bottom, then across the widest point of the collar. The corresponding areas on the horse should be measured also, so you will know if your horse takes a certain size collar (20 inches, 22 inches, 24 inches . . .).

Be observant to ill-fitting gear rubbing your horse. The most common problems are a bit rubbing the mouth and the collar rubbing the neck or shoulders. A collar-sore horse does not work to the best of its ability and can be fractious. If you must use that collar, then make a collar pad to go under it, but not joined at the ends, of a material that does not bunch up and form lumps that will rub.

A too-tight collar will cause the horse to cough when under work. The breathing is being affected by the collar pushing on the windpipe and cutting the air off Check the fit. You should be able to fit your hand between



the inside of the collar and the outside of the horse's neck at the base of the collar. The fingers are put together as in a salute, keep the thumb outside. This is a simple measure and works well. Also use your hand in this position for testing the tightness of a crupper on cart harness, only this time put your little finger against the horse's rump and your index finger under the crupper strap that leads from the saddle to the crupper loop, literally standing your hand on edge. If it is a tight fit, the crupper will rub and pull under the horse's tail. Just firm is just right.

REINS

Make sure your reins are long enough so that you can comfortably walk behind your horse and implement with plenty of rein left to handle, so that you are not literally at the end and facing the risk of running out of rein.

When turning with a long load, such as a log, step to the inside of the turn so that the load can swing away from you, not in to you. Keep changing sides as you go so that you will keep on the correct side of the log.

IMPLEMENTS

When putting the horse into the vehicle or implement, check that the hitching points (trace hooks, britchen 'D's and tug stops), are solid and not loose in anyway. The 'it will do' attitude is dangerous when dealing with a harness horse of any type and size, so remember to check harness and vehicle before setting off.

Keep all spectators out of the line of fire, except for your helper, who should be at the head of your horse while harnessing up and putting to. If you are on your own, the horse should be tied up by a halter under the winkers. Never tie up with the reins. We always leave the tie-up rope (a short one) clipped to the horse's halter and then wrapped securely to its collar, so that if she is needed to be held by someone while the handler is adjusting the equipment, or tied up in between jobs, then the lead rope is there handy.

When you wish to connect your horse to a farm implement or slide and you want to connect the trace chains to the swindle bar (swingle tree, wiffle tree), do not be tempted to step behind your horse to connect up the opposite side trace hook. A sudden move by the horse could see you wearing whatever you have half hooked up! Always do up one side then walk around the front of the horse or the back of the implement to do up the opposite side. The same applies to unhitching the horse; never be tempted to step between horse and implement at any time. Always keep hold of the reins at this time, or have your helper hold the horse until you are ready to go. No matter how quiet your horse is, always stay in contact with your animal.

Note: When using trace chains for ploughing, snigging logs or slides, there is a hook at the end of the chain to attach it to the fitting on the swindle bar. Make sure that the opening of the hook is facing inwards, so as it does not get caught on debris, logs branches etc and become unexpectedly unhooked. All sorts of scenarios spring to mind, but I am sure your imagination will tell you what will happen in the middle of a job when a chain comes off.

MORE INFORMATION

I hope that I have covered the basics of safety around heavy horses, but if there is something that anyone is not clear on, feel free to contact me at The Wheelwright Shop, Cobargo 2550. I am sure that there will be other people with differing opinions to mine, but what I have said here I have found to work for me and have learnt through personal experience, and I imagine will keep on learning as I am not too proud to say that I do not know all there is to know about heavy horses and am willing to listen to others' ideas. I felt there was a need to share my knowledge with those who are just starting out with a horse and hope that it has been of some benefit.

There are some good books and videos available from England and America on the subject of heavy horses so if you wish to write with an SAE I will send that info on to you.

A LIZARD'S TALE

by Jan South, St Arnaud, Vic.

There are no fairies at the bottom of our garden; instead, we have lots of lizards. We have large lizards and small lizards and all sizes in between. There are numerous geckos hidden in the shrubbery. We have the large, slow-moving shingle-backed lizard and the bearded dragon, more commonly known in these parts as the jew lizard (*Amphiolus barbatus*).

The bearded dragon is the most commonly found large lizard in Australia. They are so named because their throat has a sort of beard which is really a spinious fold of skin. When frightened the lizard opens its mouth widely and puffs up its beard, making it appear very fearsome.

The dragons have resided in our garden for over 25 years, and in this time they have produced many babies. The female is reputed to lay eggs and bury them. The adults eat slugs, snails, and the dreaded earwigs – the number one enemy in our local gardens. We have not needed to use slug bait for many years now to kill those nasties.

One of the dragons adores caterpillars. An old grape vine shades our back verandah. In summer Jewy arrives at the back door and demands to be fed. We pick the caterpillars off the vine and feed them to him, one at a time, with our fingers. Jewy cocks his head to one side, sights up the dangling delicacy, mouth ferociously wide, and, displaying an amazing burst of speed, he darts forward and snatches his meal. Feeding him was very scary at first, one had visions of the arm being amputated at the elbow.

During one Christmas break Jewy's daily charge along the verandah abruptly ended a leisurely game of darts. On hearing a commotion and frantic pleas for help I rushed outside to find our city house guests in a terrible state of agitation. One visitor was perched up on the woodbox while his equally heroic mate was trying to balance on the top of his Esky, with Jewy strategically placed midway between them down on the concrete. No way could I persuade them that Jewy was quite harmless.



Jewy's gluttony was almost the death of him. We made a practice of leaving a bucket of water under the vine in the shade so that the sheep dog would always have access to cool water. While on a private caterpillar safari he must have fallen from the vine and had the misfortune to drop into the water. We came home and found Jewy's bloated body floating in the bucket of water. My farmer mate fished him out and dangled him by the tail until the water drained out. In spite of my pleas, he stoutly refused to administer mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Instead, Jewy was left on a rock in the sunshine to take his chance. I am happy to say that he revived and retreated to do battle with the caterpillars another day.

The dragon family has reared several batches of young in the garden, though the parents don't live in the garden all the time. I have seen Jewy sunning himself out in the farmyard, then race to the garden gate, slip through a small hole and quietly vanish in the bulbs. One of *our* dragons has been seen in the tractor shed, in our sheep yards, and even as far away as our neighbour's shearing shed. How am I so positive that it was our dragon who was tripping around? That is easy; the poor creature had the misfortune to be in the grass when someone was mowing firebreaks, and unknowingly the mower passed over him removing the tip off his tail, thus any bearded dragon with a shortened tail has to be ours.

A tribe of shingle-back lizards (*Trachydosaurus rugosus*) lives here too. This species is unique to Australia, and is easy to recognise because of its stumpy tail and its body covering of layered scales. It is also known as the 'sleepy lizard' as it is a very slow mover. Shingle-backs and bluetongue lizards (*Teliqua scinoides*) belong to the same branch of the lizard family, the skinks, or family Scincidae.

The lizards have adapted well to life in our garden. They come and go as fancy takes them. In the wild the bearded dragons are commonly found during the day perched on fallen timber or fence posts. Unfortunately, they have the bad habit of sunning themselves on roadways and many of their species end up as road fatalities. Unlike the shingle-backs, the dragons are fast moving.

Over the years the presence of the lizards has given us some heart stopping frights. When we hear a rustle in the bushes or see a movement in the grass we automatically think *snake*. In spite of that, we would miss the lizards if they ever decided to leave the garden. The supposition that tells us that there are no snakes where there are lizards is totally incorrect.

Reference

What Animal is That?, by Harry Frauca, Currawong Press

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A GRASS ROOTS CHRISTMAS

We start to think of Christmas in the GR office in about July or August, when we're putting together our October/November issue, so those readers who like to plan ahead can begin to make gifts for friends and family. Then in the December/January issue, prepared in September – October, we include more Christmassy ideas contributed by ever-resourceful GR people. It can seem very disconcerting to be dealing with Christmas themes that early in the year, and, ironically, it doesn't help us to be any more organised in our private lives.

If you too find yourself having reached December bereft of ideas for some of the important people in your life, try a nostalgic flip through some old GRs for inspiration. There's bound to be something to suit every gift maker's capabilities and every recipient's interests. We've gone back only to GR 118 for this search, but you'll find numerous other suggestions in even earlier back copies.



FOOD

Most people are only too happy to receive gifts of home-cooked goodies. Recycling guru, Roberino, has contributed a cake (GR 118) and a pudding (GR 124). In GR 123 Heather Kozak gave instructions for making glacé fruit and a decorative and delicious stained glass Christmas cake. There are traditional cake recipes from Pam Odijk in GR 130 and Ken Woods's pudding in GR 141.

You'll also find food ideas to serve your family and friends during the holiday season, with Pam Odijk's budget Christmas meal and John Mount's drink suggestions in GR 124. Turn to the 'In The Kitchen' (formerly 'While The Billy Boils') page in each December/January issue for more great festive food ideas.



MISCELLANEOUS CRAFTS

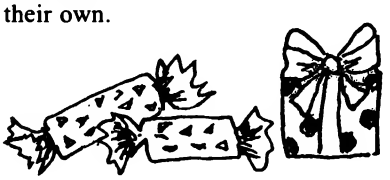
We are so impressed with the creative craftiness of some of our contributors, many of whom manage to come up with new ideas regularly. Anyone with access to dried gourds will benefit from Jose Robinson's article on gourd craft in GR 118. Also from Jose are instructions for a mosaic jewel box and a soft toy gecko in GR 130. June Birkett in GR 123 shows us how to make the life-size 'dolls' she calls Country Characters. Roberino proves there is no limit to recycling ingenuity with his gifts made from used milk cartons in GR 124. For serious stitchers there is Pam Odijk's series of Seminole patchwork gifts in GRs 129, 130 and 136, and a clever carry bag from Yvonne Landgrebe in GR 135. For simpler ideas see how to make clove oranges in GR 130, a variety of gifts in GR 136, and herbal insect repellent bags, stationery set and bath bombs in GR 141.

ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS

It's debatable who has the most fun with these, the adults who make them or the kids who receive them. Try Sherryn Savage's games for kids in GR 118 and puppet theatre in GR 124, Kate Shneider's stocking in GR 124, and Heather Kozak's delicious and decorative gingerbread farmhouse in GR 130.

DECORATIONS

Easy-to-make decorations for both home and tree will be found in GR 124, with ideas from Heather Kozak and Liz Zylinski. These are so simple that most children will be able to help. Some are suitable for older children to make on their own.



BOXES, CARDS & WRAPPING

Presentation of the gift adds the finishing touch, and it need not be an expensive commercial touch at all. Use scraps, leftovers, ingenuity and your own style to create a personalised package. You'll find ideas in GRs 118, 123 and 136.

Back copies are $4.40 each, including postage. See page 82 for ordering details.

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Nonexploding Ginger Beer

by Frank Brehe, Maitland, NSW.

One of the interesting experiences of my youth was being woken up early one summer morning in our home in Te Akau, New Zealand to dozens of small explosions and the tinkle of broken glass. We went to the kitchen and found that Dad's entire batch of ginger beer was all over the floor, along with the remains of many innocent beer bottles. He didn't try again. Yet occasionally, now and then back in Australia, I was given drinks of the most marvellous homemade ginger beer.

For many years I travelled and was too busy to think of ginger beer much, until a few years ago when I tried a commercial ginger beer soft drink. To my mind, it just wasn't like I remembered it as a child. I wanted to show my sons how good it could be and began searching for recipes. That was no real problem, but I found out just why my father's batch exploded and why so many others have problems.

I had by then begun to brew my own beer at home and noticed that almost all of the ginger beer recipes, in order to avoid the dreaded alcohol, a natural product of any 'beer' fermentation, advised people to bottle the product 'green' – before fermentation was complete. The ginger beer continues to ferment in the bottles, the gas pressure builds – and the bottles explode!

I knew that the alcoholic content could be made quite low by decreasing the amount of sugar used and had no objection to a low-alcohol brew. (I later found out that that was exactly what I had been given to drink as a child.) As I already had a beer-brewing kit, I decided to use it for ginger beer also and found it to be perfect.

RECIPE

Ginger Beer Plant

1 cup sugar
1 tbsp ground ginger
juice of 2 lemons
1 lt water

Mix ingredients together, keep covered and allow to stand in a warm place for three days. Pour off nearly all of the liquid, leaving the sediment and feeding it daily for seven days with 1 large teaspoon of sugar and 1 level teaspoon of ground ginger. The plant can be used any time after 4 days.

Brewing Ginger Beer

3 kg sugar
15 cups boiling water
2½ cups lemon juice, strained
1 lt ginger beer plant
cold water
2 tbsp ground ginger
extra sugar, for bottling

Place 3 kilos of sugar and 15 cups of boiling water into the brewer or other suitable large vessel, stir with a wooden spoon until the sugar is dissolved. Add strained lemon juice.

Add cold water until the mixture is lukewarm, then add 1 litre of ginger beer plant and stir thoroughly. Add water to make a total of 25 litres, and 2 tablespoons of ground ginger, stir and cover. Stir again in about two hours and cover. Stand for seven days or until fermentation stops.

At this point in my proceedings, all of my old beer bottles were full of beer, so I bottled the ginger beer in plastic soft drink bottles and found them to be perfect. Even if dropped, they won't explode. Place ½ teaspoon of sugar in each 1.25 litre drink bottle, fill with ginger beer and cap.

Pour the sediment from the brewer back in a jar and continue to feed daily as your next ginger beer plant. Your ginger beer can be consumed after six weeks, but is much smoother and tastier after six months or more. Enjoy!



ALCOHOL AND PREGNANCY

Research suggests that a single drinking binge by a pregnant woman could be enough to cause permanent damage to her unborn child's brain. Although experiments were conducted on rats, the results explain why children of these mothers may suffer learning disabilities and other brain disorders. Rat fetuses were most susceptible to alcohol-related neurological damage at a period when brain cells were developing and building the connections needed for memory, learning and thought. In humans this process starts in the sixth month of gestation and continues for two years after birth. A 1996 US study found that 20 percent of women who drink do not stop during pregnancy.

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SELF-SUFFICIENCY WITH MILK

by Michel Dodel, South Tabulam, NSW.

A society's self-sufficiency with milk decreases with rising affluence. People have enough money to buy (subsidised) milk, which saves them a lot of work. They are likely to live in cities, where they can't offer enough space to dairy animals. People feel more independent without dairy animals needing to be milked twice every day. If you are planning towards this direction, you need to understand that a milk animal is not a tap which can be used when needed. In general, a dairy animal requires to be milked every 12 hours. Any irregularity in your milking pattern can cause serious damage to the very sensitive udder organ. Traditionally, every milker had an allocated cow which they milked every day in order to reduce irregularities in milking habits.

Good husbandry will also produce 'surplus animals', that is, too many males and unwanted females. Chances are you will find good homes for the females, or will even be able to sell them, but for the males it is a different story. Please resist the temptation to give them away as pets. Once they have outgrown their 'cuteness', they are very likely to have a miserable life as lawnmowers or road-edge clearers. It is probably more merciful to butcher them for their meat and skin.

THE RIGHT ANIMALS

Animal owners have to be aware that they are taking on a big responsibility. An animal is not a consumer article which can be left neglected in a corner. Be sure about having enough time, every day, for them. You will need to provide them with enough space and clean shelter. It is very useful to follow Bill Mollison's strategy of 'element analysis' before you decide which sort of dairy animals you want to keep. Let's do an element analysis for goats.

First we look at their needs. Goats need space and a clean shelter, water, rocks to wear their hoofs down. They need other goats (herd animals need at least one companion) and of course air to breathe. For good health and milk production they require a variety of foods, including herbs for worm control.

Typical goat behaviour includes climbing, running, fighting, pulling and pushing (you will need solid fencing!), rubbing, ring barking, foraging, browsing and grazing, bleating. Then there are breed-specific behaviours and characteristics like horns, or age and size of the animal.

Goat products are fur, skin, meat, milk, manure and warmth (in colder climates the goats are kept below bedrooms).

Do similar detailing for cows and sheep and then ask the following questions.

- Of what use are the products of the dairy animal to the needs of other components (us, the garden, the food forest, etc)?
- What needs of the dairy animals are supplied by the system (for example, can you grow enough food for them)?
- Where are the dairy animals incompatible with other components (for example, near waterways, in vegetable garden)?
- Where are the dairy animals a benefit to other parts of the system (for example, fertilising, terracing, tractor system)?

The answers will provide you with the information necessary to decide which species of dairy animal you want.

To be self-sufficient with milk requires growing most of your animals' food. Pasture will do the trick if you have cows or sheep (one cow or four sheep per two hectares of pasture with plenty of trees growing in it). However, for good milk production you will have to feed grains and roughage. Fair production rates for close to natural and organically kept dairy animals are shown in the chart.

Goats are browsers rather than grazers, which means they would rather reach up for their food than down. They won't be satisfied with pasture at all, but require roughage, bark, crop residues, herbs and some grains. These food sources can all be grown as multipurpose plants within your system: wattles, leucaenas, casuarinas, pigeon peas, arrowroot, yacon, alfalfa, broom, red clover, barley, buckwheat, chia, corn, oats, lablab, wheat, and many more!

Dairy animals are ruminants and, unlike the average dog or cat, they are productive animals, which puts additional strain on their bodies and requires additional nutrients. Healthy, productive dairy animals need diverse

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fodder, however, introduction of 'new' fodder has to happen gradually over about 10 to 14 days. It can be detrimental to the digestive systems of ruminants if the animals' fodder is abruptly changed from dry winter hay to fresh spring pasture. The same can be said for switching them from, for example, oats and wheat to corn and sunflower seeds – a sudden complete change will cause bloating.

People who can't grow enough food for their dairy animals will have to buy hay (alfalfa, legume grass), grains and/or pelleted foodstuffs. The origin of most of these foods is something you probably don't want to know about, as are the levels of biological and chemical contamination. Unless we can be sure that the foodstuffs are free of hormones, chemical residues and meat protein of the same species we really should not buy them, nor feed them to our animals!

This underlines the importance of growing their food on our own land. Aim to satisfy all the dairy animals' needs from within your system and aim to keep and use a fair share of their products. Unless there is access to plenty of pasture land, most people are left with a choice between goats and sheep. Goats are considered to be more difficult to keep, but their products are very safe for us to use and consume. Placed correctly in our system, they are not only very efficient garden and terrace-builders, but helpful maintenance keepers as well.

HEALTH

Health is the natural state for any animal! Small herd keepers who pay attention to proper feeding and other management details have very few health problems with their animals. Most domestic herd animals are not raised under natural conditions. For example, dairy cows are often kept 50 head per hectare and goats on boggy waterlogged areas. Subsequently, these animals require regular antibiotic and worm treatments. These cows (the source of shop milk) would drop dead after a few days without their rations of antibiotics, while the grass-force-fed goat will quickly succumb to unnatural levels of worm infestations!

Tobacco leaves, garlic, wormwood, rue, tansy (chopped up finely and mixed through the feed) do not cause wormlessness, but they can well be used as a deterrent if you subscribe to the idea that a manageable number of worms may not be harmful but actually desirable. A worm-free dairy animal would be impossible to find and it would most likely die from that condition. Wormless goats and cows are an ideal to be cherished only by the mega-dairy companies and the pharmaceutical/veterinary industry. A 'natural' worm infestation plays a helpful role in carrying out seasonal changes in the metabolism, and worms are an essential part within the digestive system of the animal. But understand: worms can kill dairy animals! The reasons for such a severe worm infestation are either poor management or that the animals are kept in unsuitable areas with unsuitable foods.

We have been keeping goats (and sometimes cows) in the warm-humid north-east of NSW for over ten years. We have never drenched any of our animals, nor have we had any problems with worms.

Production Rates			
	Per Day	**Lactation Period**	**Per Season**
cow (Friesian)	6-15 lt	10-18 mths	3000 lt
goat (Saanen)	3.5 lt	10 mths	1050 lt
sheep	3 lt	6 mths	540 lt

POISONING

Poisoning from plants is rare! A dairy farmer who recently lost a goat to lantana poisoning invited me to have a closer look at the circumstances which caused the death. The goat herd was fenced into a grass paddock, almost bare of shrubs or trees. This goat managed to get through the fence and headed straight for the only bushes around – a small lantana patch in a gully which had escaped clearing. The goat chomped into this 'woody delicacy' until it dropped dead. Death by indulgence! Proper husbandry eliminates such scenarios because well kept animals don't overeat on one plant, certainly not if it is a poisonous one!

Plants to watch out for include bracken, milkweed, lantana and rhubarb leaves. Symptoms of poisoning are vomiting, frothing, staggering, cries for help, convulsions and sudden death. The most common cause of poisoning in dairy animals is overfeeding of protein substitutes like urea, or animal-derived (often from the same species!) meat protein. If you realise early enough that an animal has been poisoned, you can induce it to vomit the toxic substances with a drink of warm, salty water, or a couple of tablespoons of salt on the back of the tongue.

Next issue: more about dairy animals, troubleshooting, further information.

PESTS AND BORAX

Borax is a fairly safe insecticide and herbicide. It has mild antiseptic and fungicidal properties and can been used in baits to control ants and cockroaches. As it is slightly toxic, any baits made should be kept out of the reach of children and pets.

For ants, dissolve two cups of icing sugar and two tablespoons of borax in a cup of water. Pour liquid into jars loosely filled with cottonwool, secure lids and pierce holes in tops. Place in close proximity to ant problem.

For cockroaches, mix together equal parts sugar and borax and sprinkle around all those dark spots cockroaches love to hide: cupboards, under the sink, drawers etc.

For silverfish, make a bait using equal parts flour, borax and sugar. Place bait in jar tops and leave them in corners, cupboards, drawers and shelves.

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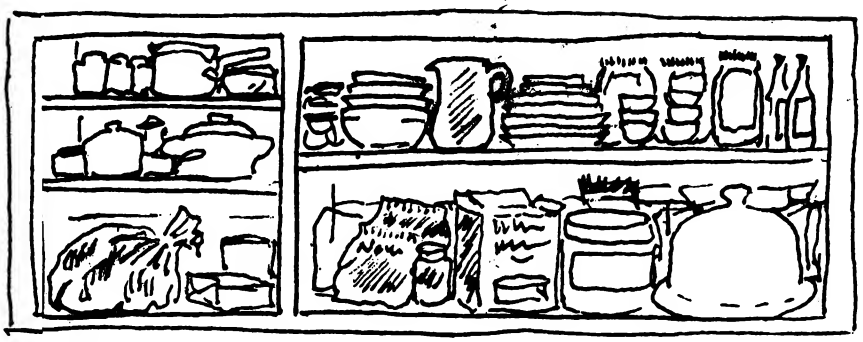
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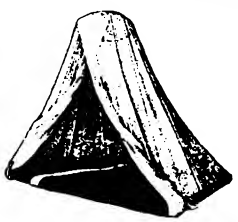
My kitchen cupboards were never up to expectations, so I decided to do something about it. I removed one MDF (medium density fibreboard) shelf and took it to the local glaziers. I received strange looks (so what's new?) when I told them what I wanted. 'Second-hand quarter-inch glass the same size as this old shelf and please remove all the sharp corners.' They hunted through their sheet glass which was destined for the tip. 'Does it matter if there are a few scratches?' 'No, that's OK.'

I got two glass shelves for every MDF one, drilled new holes for twice as many shelves and therefore shelf supports. I've increased the amount of light getting to the back of the cupboards – glass lets light through instead of cutting it out – and I can see through the glass to the back of the shelves. Fantastico! The cupboards now look sensational for the same price as an MDF shelf and I can reuse the MDF shelves I've taken out in the shed or for something else, maybe speaker boxes. If I was building a house I'd go for the glass shelves instead of MDF ones from the beginning.

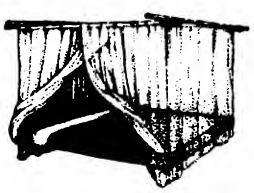
Those scratches? If you're still fazed by that, well, I never notice them; there's usually something covering them, and they're not really deep anyway.

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REHABILITATING STREAMS

by Stephen Platt, Land For Wildlife Officer, NRCL.

Anyone fortunate enough to have a stream running through their property will need to take steps to maintain, or perhaps to restore, the health of the riparian and aquatic ecosystems.

EXCLUDE STOCK

Fencing is needed to restrict stock access and thus avoid soil disturbance caused by trampling, a major cause of bank erosion, and to prevent stock from eating the vegetation, including new seedlings. Short periods of light grazing, to reduce summer fire hazard from long grass or in times of drought, may be acceptable. Leave access to the stream for tankers in case of fire. You might pipe water to troughs for animals, or leave some access points unfenced if provision is made to prevent erosion at these points, such as with gently sloping gravel walkways. The recommended minimum width of a stream buffer is 20 metres.

REGENERATE/REVEGETATE

Vegetation will bind the soil, thus helping to prevent or arrest erosion and the detrimental effects of sediment in streams and water storages.

Natural riverside vegetation from your district is adapted to the local soils and climate and is resistant to most local pests and diseases. It is therefore the most appropriate vegetation for local wildlife. Riverside vegetation is vitally important to the maintenance of in-stream life.

Ground cover is just as important as larger shrubs and trees in controlling erosion and providing habitat for wildlife. So, where appropriate, you should revegetate with a variety of native plants that occur along local undisturbed rivers and streams. Advice on local species should be available from NRCL nurseries or NRE regional offices. You can seek advice on local species from an NRCL nursery, or contact your local NRE office or field naturalists club.

Careful observation of the local natural riverside vegetation is a useful introduction to planning revegetation works and is highly recommended.

CONTROL PEST PLANTS AND ANIMALS

There are a range of techniques available to control pest animals and weeds, all compatible with conserving environmental quality. Consider the environmental effects before using chemical controls. Chemicals may kill microscopic soil organisms and so reduce soil quality, with consequential effects on the vegetation. Overspray, drift and chemical run-off that reaches the water can kill fish and aquatic invertebrates. Contact your local NRE office for specific advice if necessary.

Pest animals such as rabbits can ruin regeneration by eating seedlings and stripping bark. Plant guards or rabbit-proof fencing, together with a rabbit control program, may be needed. Insects might also have to be controlled, at least in the early stages of regeneration. Foxes are very skilful at catching wildlife and are known to prey on platypuses. If local native wildlife is a problem, contact your nearest NRE regional office for advice.

A continuing program of pest control should be developed, ideally in conjunction with your neighbours. Your local Landcare group may be able to offer support and advice.

LEAVE GROUND LITTER AND RIVER STRUCTURE

Ground litter (leaves, twigs, branches, logs) reduces the impact of rainfall, hence helping to prevent and control erosion. It provides nourishment for the soil, which in turn supports a range of plant species. Ground litter also provides important wildlife habitat. Snags in streams and the emergent roots of riverside vegetation are very important in providing habitats and spawning sites for fish. Some species, such as river blackfish and Murray cod, deposit their eggs in hollow submerged branches. The major source of in-stream fish habitat, such as snags and



wood debris, is vegetation which drops litter into the stream, thus providing a source of food for many small stream animals and, ultimately, larger consumers like the platypus.

Shade from vegetation buffers a stream against high summer water temperatures, and the associated reduction in dissolved oxygen levels, which may kill fish directly, or increase stress, leading to greater susceptibility to disease. If there is a weir or other barrier in the stream that cannot be removed, ensure that it has a 'fish ladder' to allow migrating species access to feeding and breeding areas upstream.

Rocks and logs provide moist sites for the germination of seedlings, thereby contributing to the ongoing maintenance of the habitat. They also provide refuges for many ground-dwelling animals. Altering or removing stream-bed material such as gravel, pebbles or boulders has adverse effects on native fish. These substrates are habitat for aquatic invertebrates, mosses and liverworts, and are used by fish as spawning sites and nursery grounds for juveniles. Riffles are important oxygenation sites in streams.

Natural riverside habitats, such as rocks, logs and sheltered banks, are also very important to many aquatic invertebrates and amphibians whose life cycles involve an emergent phase, and to their predators.

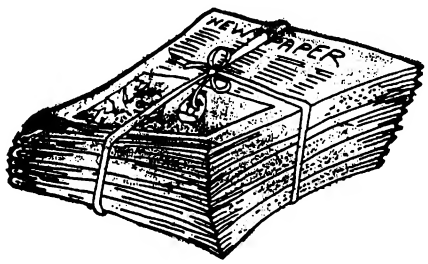
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NEWSPAPER AS MULCH

by Keith Upward, Darraweit Guim, Vic.

I have been using old newspapers in the garden for years, either as a bedding base, mulch or worm feed. Like most of us, I have been concerned whether or not the printing ink presents an environmental toxic hazard. I have a cousin in America who happens to be an industrial chemist and also an executive of an international printing ink company. I posed my concerns to my cousin who then supplied me with some relevant information.

The inks, that his company supplies to newspapers (worldwide including Australia), meet all standards of the Newspaper Association of America (NAA). The company believes that their inks are not hazardous when used by printers and that the ink on the newspapers does not present a hazard to consumers in normal use. Based on information from their suppliers, they know of no heavy metals such as lead, chromium or cadmium which would be present in any of their inks. There is copper-organo pigment in their blues and barium-organo pigment in some of their reds, but copper and barium are not usually considered heavy metals; in addition, these compounds are not water soluble. However, the company has not tested the use of newspapers as mulch or worm food from either a safety or efficacy standpoint. Accordingly, they did a limited literature search on the subject, with the assistance of NAA and the National Association of Printing Ink Manufacturers (NAPIM).



They were able to find only a small amount of information directly relating to the use of newspapers as mulch. However, there was considerable information regarding the use of it as cattle bedding. They believe this is applicable because the cattle bedding becomes mixed with manure and eventually ends up being used as fertiliser.

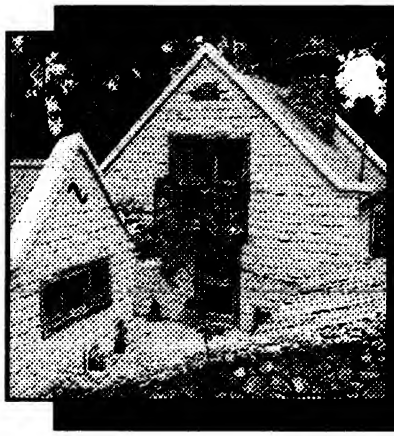
There is an article on the Internet prepared by the University of Illinois, College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service (c1995). This article describes how to use newspapers as mulch. However, it does provide some 'inaccurate' information regarding the coloured material. It is not true that lead and cadmium compounds would be in coloured comics, newspaper and inserts. There may be a slight possibility that glossy inserts, not printed by the newspaper and not using their products, may use some lead-based pigments. There would be no use of lead or cadmium pigments in the coloured ink used in the newspaper itself or the comics.

There is also a mention on the Internet ('The Garden Patch', Paul Own Davis, 4/05/97), of two commercial mulches made from newspapers, Biomulch, manufactured by a company in Dorsey, Illinois and Garden Guard, which is a mulch supplied by Nimby Inc. The latter is discussed on a web page from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

A lengthy report by Penn State University (Pennsylvania Recycling Conference, 1989) concludes in part: 'Analysis of newspaper, xerox copies and computer printouts at Penn State indicates that heavy metals and other trace elements of concern were present at very low levels and well within safe limits, even if the bedding is consumed by the animals. No apparent animal health problems or milk quality problems were encountered in the Penn State bedding trials or even in feeding studies when prepared newsprint was eaten at levels of 1.8 lb (approx 800 g) to 2.4 lb (approx 1.1 kg) per head daily.'

The use of newspapers for bedding should help provide necessary organic matter in the soil when manures containing it are spread. It should be pointed out, that the actual amount of ink present in newspapers is very low, perhaps, roughly 9 kg of ink per 1 tonne of paper (1 percent).

I think that we may safely assume that this information, if correct, is relevant to all newsprint, coloured or black ink. However, I will still be wary of



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glossy magazines and inserts. Like many of you, I am not yet privy to the internet and so here is the way that I use old newspapers in the garden.

NEWSPAPERS IN THE GARDEN

Shredded newspaper and photocopy paper mixed with sawdust and wood shavings make a very good deep litter for the chook house. In an 8' x 4' x 6" area, half a dozen chooks will turn the litter into a rich mulch in 12 months. A handful of lime thrown in every now and then will keep the litter sweet and practically odourless.

A layer of soaked newspapers provides an excellent weed barrier for no-dig garden beds, and, with a sprinkle of blood and bone, the newspaper will break down in one garden season.

A fine 'flock'-like mulch can be made from newsprint using a mulcher or lawn mower (with catcher). The trick is to soak the newspapers for a few hours and then let them drain for a few days so that they are not sopping wet but just feel damp. To mulch with a lawn mower, lay a strip of the newspapers on the lawn, and, with the catcher attached, mow over them. If you have dampened the paper down properly, it will not fly all over the lawn. The finished 'flock' will have a pleasant feel when you run your hands through it. Mix the newspaper mulch with animal manure and spread on the garden or use as worm feed. Do not use newspaper on its own as garden mulch, as, like pure wood shavings and sawdust, it will deplete your soil of nitrogen. If you can't add animal manures, add grass clippings or composted vegetable matter, 50/50 is ideal.

Composted newspaper, like sawdust, if allowed to dry out, will become water repellent, so, if using it in potting mix, always keep moist and add water-retaining agents such as perlite, charcoal granules or proprietary brands of wetting agents from your local nursery.

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ROUND THE MARKET PLACE

We hope you enjoy this feature introducing new products relevant to readers' lifestyles and interests.

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The entire Davis & Waddell range is available from leading houseware retailers nationally. To locate your nearest stockist please call 1800-337-363, or contact Davis & Waddell, PO Box 678, Mt Waverley 3149.

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HOMOEOPATHIC REMEDY FOR WOMEN

Femme Ease is a homoeopathic remedy that can be used by women to alleviate the symptoms of PMT, menstrual pains and cramps. Unlike many products on the market that need to be taken daily to be effective, this new remedy is taken at the first sign of discomfort and as needed thereafter – usually every couple of hours. Each 340 mg tablet contains five homoeopathic remedies effective in countering gynaecological complaints. Femme Ease is best taken separately from food and drink and can be used with other medication. The product is available in health food stores, pharmacies, Soul Pattinson and Woolworths stores throughout Australia and comes in a 30-tablet strip packet which should last about three months.

For more information contact: WorldTrade Pty Ltd, PO Box 613, Narraben 2101, or call 02-9970-7335. Alternatively, see the website at http://femmease.com

CHILDREN'S RECYCLED TYRE SWINGS



These recycled tyres have been sculpted into appealing animal-shaped swings. The most popular in the present range are the horse and reindeer (especially with Christmas coming). The designs belong to a retired sculptor, and the swings have been independently tested in a UK laboratory and checked to conform to Australian Standards. They are durable and strong, and all hardware has been covered to ensure a smooth surface. Suited to both indoors and out, the swings come completely assembled and ready to hang, with the rope holding up to 90 kg. These wildlife creations are ideal presents for children, and make a novel sculpture and great conversation piece for any backyard. Prices start from $170 and swings are available via mail order, or directly from the Brunswick factory and Three Wise Monkeys in Berrima, NSW.

For more information contact: Divisible by Zero, PO Box 25, Brunswick East 3056, ph: 03-9388-9902, or visit their website at http://www.dbz.com.au

Recent Releases

On this page we present information about newly published books that may interest readers, with details of prices and publishers. Titles described can be ordered through your nearest bookstore.

★ FEATURE TITLE ★

ATTRACTING BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR GARDEN

Densey Clyne

Butterflies are a beautiful sight, especially when they are fluttering around our gardens. Find out which butterflies are likely to frequent your area and the best plants to grow to attract them; this includes food plants for butterflies as well as for the caterpillar stage. Densey Clyne outlines the life cycles of 32 species of Australian butterflies and her stunning colour photography will help readers identify the butterflies they see, and sometimes even the caterpillars, pupae and eggs as well. There's even a section on breeding butterflies. Clyne is a respected photographer and naturalist, well known through her television appearances and magazine articles on Australian wildlife. The eye-catching butterflies in this book are all common, so a little careful planning in your garden will allow you to enjoy their presence. Would make an attractive gift for both children and adults with an interest in the natural world.

P/b, 88pp, New Holland Publishers, 14 Aquatic Drive, Frenchs Forest 2086. Ph: 02-9975-6799. RRP $23.95.



SKIN SAVER REMEDIES

Juta Stepanovs

Juta Stepanovs used to wear lots of make-up and spend a small fortune on cosmetics and potions – mostly to cover up the spots underneath – but today she saves her money, never wears make-up and gets plenty of comments about her beautiful skin. Stepanovs believes the secret to healthy skin is to keep it simple and fresh. What we usually need to keep our skin looking and feeling great can be found in the kitchen cupboard, and is often edible. The secrets Stepanovs outlines in her book are easy to follow and give us a range of options, in case we are out of a particular item. She considers the structure and function of skin and how it can be used as an emotional barometer. Skin disorders are listed, together with numerous recipes to counteract each of them, along with suggestions for looking after the body, eyes, hands, feet and hair. Some of her favourite ingredients to pamper herself with are spirulina, kefir, kombucha, papaya, guava and cider vinegar.

P/b, 140pp, Harald W Tietze Publishing, PO Box 34, Bermagui 2546. Ph: 02-6493-4552. RRP $9.95.

STORIES TO EAT WITH A BLOOD PLUM

Jackie French

This fun kid's book follows on from *Stories to Eat with a Banana* and *Stories to Eat with a Watermelon* and continues the tales of Phredde the Phaerie and her best friend Prudence. Light-hearted (but scary), these stories include a grey-fleshed zombie librarian tending her blood-starved books in the school library. There's a 5000-year-old Egyptian mummy roaming the corridors, not to mention giant slugs, the Snot Phaerie, piranhas, a few werewolves and Dad's pet giant sloth. Can Phredde and Prudence escape these ghastly torments? Well, of course they can, but how do they escape? That's the question. Jackie French is a best selling author and won the CBC Young Readers Award earlier this year. Any of these books would make fun Christmas presents for younger members of the family and would also appeal to reluctant readers.

P/b, 144pp, HarperCollins Publishers, PO Box 321, Pymble 2073. Ph: 02-9952-5000. RRP $11.95.

COMPANION PLANTING IN AUSTRALIA

Brenda Little

Grass Roots readers will learn all sorts of secrets from this book. Companion planting is the system whereby specific plants are deliberately placed together or apart in order to minimise pests and encourage maximum growth. Such planting has become quite mainstream these days, probably in direct response to the increasing quantities of chemicals dumped on our food plants each year. This is the second edition of Brenda Little's book and includes attractive colour drawings. Little also has an organic gardening title under her belt, and bases her knowledge on observation and experience – her own, her friends' and her family's. This compilation is set out alphabetically, making it easy to access the required information. In addition to a summary of good and bad garden companions, Little has included handy tips on dealing with gardens, pests and plants.

P/b, 95pp, New Holland Publishers, 14 Aquatic Drive, Frenchs Forest 2086. Ph: 02-9975-6799. RRP $15.95.

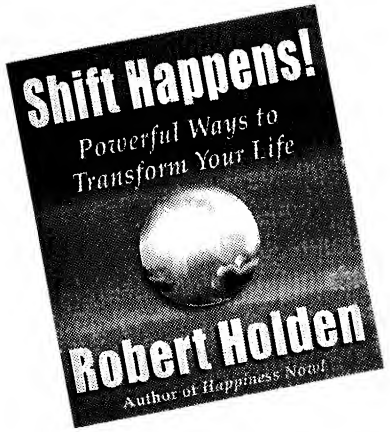
THE ANGER OF AUBERGINES

stories of women and food

Bulbul Sharma

Sit back and enjoy these tales from India and then try out some of the recipes at the end of each story. The title of this book is actually lifted from one of its chapter titles. The chapter tells of Mrs Kumar's quiet life and how her unemotional husband, who left their long, passionless marriage without explanation, still turns up for the Sunday lunch she prepares for him. He prefers not to speak as it spoils the meal of aubergines and meat curry, and insists on making an absolute pig of himself, obviously relishing every mouthful. Yet we learn that this weekly indulgence of Mrs Kumar's excellent fare costs him dearly as he ends up in agony each Sunday night, refusing to take his doctor's advice in sticking to nonspicy foods. As he chews on his antacid tablets and writhes around in bed, he feels justified in leaving Mrs Kumar! This and the other stories make for entertaining reading, but, be warned, they will whet the appetite and inflame the senses.

P/b, 152pp, Spinifex Press, 504 Queensberry Street, North Melbourne 3051. Ph: 03-9329-6088. RRP $19.95.



SHIFT HAPPENS
Powerful Ways to Transform Your Life
Robert Holden

This is a motivational book presented in easy-to-digest segments. Holden shows us how to recognise and move through emotional blocks. He uses stories of people he knows to illustrate his helpful hints on states of mind like happiness, trust, anger, worry and creativity.

P/b, 254pp, Hodder Headline, Level 22, 201 Kent Street, Sydney 2000. Ph: 02-8248-0800. RRP $21.95.

CATS
David Alderton

This concise pocket guide to more than 250 breeds of domestic cat comes in that familiar Dorling Kindersley photo-encyclopedic style. There is a surprising amount of detail given to the background and features of each breed. The photographic fur swatches help speedy and accurate identification, and the evolution of the domestic cat is outlined, together with a glossary of breeders' terms. Alderton is an acknowledged international authority on pet care and his special interest is cats.

P/b, 256pp, Dorling Kindersley, c/- Penguin Books, PO Box 257, Ringwood, 3134. Ph: 1800-331-015. RRP $32.90.

TEACH YOURSELF BACH FLOWER REMEDIES
Stefan Ball

Bach flower remedies are used to balance negative mental states and emotions and this Teach Yourself publication will provide you with the tools to use the remedies successfully. You can find out how to select the appropriate remedy, what each remedy is for, not to mention necessary basic information about Bach flower remedies. All chapters recap the main points and most have exercises to test your learning. There are also steps outlined to help you extend your skills to assist others. You need to be able to recognise your feelings if Bach flower remedies are to work for you. They gently peel away the emotions, like onion layers, until you come face to face with the real issue.

P/b, 191pp, Hodder Headline Australia, 201 Kent Street, Sydney 2000. Ph: 02-8248-0800. RRP $21.95.

A LONG WAY FROM SILVER CREEK
A Family Memoir
Margaret Gee

This is a moving tribute to three generations of Margaret Gee's family who lived on the land at Silver Creek in north-eastern Victoria. We are given an engaging glimpse into the resourcefulness and self-sufficiency of life on the land during the Depression; not to mention the living hell Gee's father endured when he became a prisoner of the Japanese at Changi and ended up working with other Australians building the Burma Railway. We also learn of the enduring romance between Gee's parents and their 'understanding' that helped her father keep going, plus an amusing look at life in Beechworth surrounded by some wonderful and eccentric characters.

P/b, 351pp, Margaret Gee, PO Box 221, Double Bay, 1360. Ph: 02-9365-3266. RRP $29.95.

LIFE IN THE TALL EUCALYPT FORESTS
David Lindenmayer and Esther Beaton

The timber industry is endangering many of our forest ecosystems and this beautiful publication shows us how much we have to lose by insensitive logging methods. With its focus on the tall eucalypt forests of Victoria's Central Highlands, this publication shows us a range of habitat zones, from the tree canopy to the forest floor, and how the inhabitants work together to make up a dynamic and finely balanced ecosystem. Photographer Esther Beaton has won the 1996 Australian Geographic Award for Excellence for photography and it's easy to see why, while scientist David Lindenmayer's commitment to and passion for the subject is palpable.

P/b, 96pp, New Holland Publishers, 14 Aquatic Drive, Frenchs Forest 2086. Ph: 02-9975-0699. RRP 29.95.

2001 DAY-TO-DAY CALENDARS

Is it sometimes hard to find a quiet moment each morning? Try one of these day-to-day calendars as a way to stop and contemplate for a minute or two. Each day you can be calmed or inspired by a fresh message on your desk calendar. Paul Wilson's *Calm at Work* provides you with reminders to keep your cool,such as, 'You'll feel calm if you walk away from the things you can't do anything about, and concentrate on those you can influence'. Or *Health* magazine's *Health* provides daily tips on keeping yourself in top shape, such as, 'You'll burn 25 percent more calories/kilojoules after a spicy meal than you'll burn after a bland one'. Take your pick.

The Ink Group, PO Box 526, Alexandria 1435. Ph:02-9950-9777. RRP $20.95.



2001 CROSS STITCH DESIGNS
the essential reference book

This Better Homes and Gardens collection of cross stitch designs is a substantial reference book that will certainly become an enduring feature of any stitcher's library. Cross stitch is the most popular needlework technique ever and key designer Barbara Sestock has come up with designs that cover everything you can think of, for example florals, animals, borders, patterns and Christmas themes. The colours are subtle, while the triple-checked design charts are easy to follow, and, although the book is obviously American in origin, there is even a chapter on Australasian designs. At the back of the book are helpful tips, specialty stitches and a range of patterns to help get you started.

H/b, 335pp, Murdoch Books, GPO Box 1203, Sydney 1045. Ph: 02-9692-2339. RRP $37.95.



DOWN HOME ON THE FARM

by Megg Miller.

Santa is coming, the signs on local shops proclaim, reminding everyone that Christmas is alarmingly close. Around here, however, folk are more preoccupied with taming the verdant growth along roadsides and in paddocks than with what they'll be doing on Christmas Day. We were blessed with generous falls of late spring rain and, weeks later, it's still bucketing down. Catchment reservoirs have benefited, but now we're crying 'enough, enough!' The ensuing lavish growth may be a fire risk come summer, so tackling it is everyone's responsibility.

When it's dry underfoot and the sun is shining every man (and his machine) is out and about, cutting and slashing. Ride-ons and lawn mowers have become the implements of the tractorless minority. Regardless, each of us is hellbent on the same outcome: 'Gotta get this cut back before it dries off.' Unfortunately it's still raining and the forecast is for more to come. I've joined this sweaty throng mowing or brush cutting where and when I can. With time at a premium the town block has had to be delegated to a mowing contractor. There is enough here to keep me busy until Christmas.

By the time my trusty old ride-on was operational, the grass had benefited from a head start. A veritable forest surrounded the place. In the big paddock the pig pen was so well screened you almost needed a compass to find it. For weeks I'd beaten a path through each day, never quite knowing if a snake or wandering guinea fowl awaited me. When one morning I stumbled over a headless turkey, it became imperative cutting commenced immediately. The abundant growth had seemed ideal for camouflaging nests from ravens and giving seclusion to setting hens. The presence of a dead body indicated the fox also considered the undergrowth perfect for making undetected raids on the place. No wonder the dog had been dashing from one side of the property to the other each night barking loudly. Protecting her charges must have been a nightmare.

Even when the grass and weeds were long and purportedly protecting the birds, ravens managed to glean lots of eggs and even young stock. A cheeky specimen awoke me one morning with its antics in the bushes close by the bedroom. A hen must have slipped under the low branches to lay, observed by this ever cunning cur. A noisy ruckus had ensued, the hen clearly failing to hand over his fresh breakfast egg quickly enough. The season's crop of goslings weren't as successful in standing up to him; he was picking them off one by one. It wasn't until I returned early one afternoon to collect birds for a display at a local show that I learnt of his activities. A much attacked, headless gosling was dead on the ground. I'd suspected his depredation but the protective behaviour of the adult geese had made it impossible to count or get close to their young. The greedy raven couldn't resist his last supper and his cohorts, sensitive about self-preservation, immediately packed up and left. The cruelty this species inflicts is horrible; not content with a decent meal, they seem driven to cause as much mayhem and suffering as possible.

Fortunately it hasn't all been glum in birdland. One turkey hen in particular has created cheerful chaos. Hand raised with half a dozen others last January, she's proved an audacious character. Selected for the Melbourne Show team, she disappeared without trace a few days before entries were due on display. There wasn't even a feather around as a clue. A month later she reappeared as bold as brass with a clutch of poults. Concerned for their safety, I slipped out after dinner to catch and relocate them. Once again Ms Turkey had disappeared. I systematically tramped up and down the paddock, giving up finally and just standing deep in thought. Glancing down, I found I was standing on the turkey's tail. Suddenly she took off, leaving half her tail under my foot. With some effort mother and babies were successfully settled into the garden. A week later when Ruby Red hatched a couple of poults she too was moved there for safety reasons. Would you believe that Ms Turkey up and left her family this



past weekend. Believing her to have been foxed, I traipsed around in spitting rain, looking for telltale feathers. Later she turned up with the free range flock, as cheery and feckless as ever. Poor Ruby Red is left with a nest of eggs she's keen to sit on and bored poults that climb all over her and yearn for adventure. No doubt they'll soon learn to expect the unexpected.

By contrast, nothing unintended occurs in the vegie garden. Certainly plants bolt to seed or spread unbecomingly into their neighbour's space, but a quick snip soon restores order. I have been indulgent and allowed last season's nasturtiums to wander, but their freedom is at end as it's time to reclaim the path and adjacent beds. As the summer seedlings go into the different beds, fresh soil and litter are added. The resultant growth is staggering, even the snails are massive!

Roberino would probably approve of how the garden was developed, lots of cardboard and old magazines to suppress weeds, endless loads of leaf rakings and poultry poo, and mulch from a variety of sources. A thank you note from a local show where the birds were on display attests to the recycling that has gone into my plot. 'Thanks also for taking the load of straw, I always feel unhappy to see it just go to the tip,' the show coordinator wrote. Heavens, I should be thanking them. My van was groaning with its load when I left the showgrounds, and this followed a mini load the previous evening when the birds were collected.

The trip down to collect birds from the Melbourne Show wasn't wasted either, I was able to clean out the goose

cages and fill discarded feed bags with mucky straw. More recently I've discovered a source of used cardboard boxes. What joy, they're quicker to use in the garden than old magazines and the supply is endless. Usually the owner has to pay for their removal, so no effort is too much on her part to facilitate my scrounging. It truly is madness what we waste today, and so pleasing to be able to recycle a little of it.

Christmas, I need to remind myself, is imminent. Preceding it are a couple of weeks punctuated by birthdays of friends, family and godchildren, and by the time I attend to these it will be holiday time. This week three of my older 'godies' celebrate birthdays, Tanja, Gareth, and Josie, who has her 21st, and very soon Bronwon turns seven. Shopping, visiting, partying, I'm not sure how I'm going to fit all this frivolity in. It's a great pity we can't apply for an extension of a week or so as with our Business Activity Statement, just to get some cooking done and allow time for pre-Christmas chores. As it's not going to happen I'll have to look lively. The multitude of advertising brochures that clog up the mailbox may at last warrant opening and, together with mail order catalogues from 'good causes', should provide answers to my prayers. 'Nice practical presents,' I'll be feverishly muttering when I set out to do the Christmas shopping. My darling daughter is being arch about her home-made presents and celebratory preparations. Honestly, I've made so many bits and pieces over the years I've exhausted my creativity. It's time to turn the tables and I'll shop till I drop. I hope you all enjoy this special time of year as much as we will.

PENPALS

Hi out there! I am a 12½ year old girl who would just looove to correspond with males and females, ages 12 to 13, with bluey-green and green eyes. My hobbies include: horses, swimming, art, bike riding, getting letters, writing them, listening to tapes, the radio and heaps more. I will answer every letter I receive.

Hannah
C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

My name is Tara, Tassie for short. I'm 13 years old. My hobbies are horse riding, playing the drums, listening to heavy metal music, hanging out and partying. I would like a penpal between the ages of 11 and 15, guy or gal. I will be looking forward to answering all of your letters. So if I sound like the perfect penpal to you then pick up that lazy pen and write.

Tassie
C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

I am a 31 year old married mother of two boys aged 4 and almost 2. Born and bred city slickers, we have just recently moved to our dream of 16 pristine acres in the mountains. I enjoy reading, gardening, sewing, writing and receiving letters, and would love to hear from anyone interested in friendship and a good chat.

Eve Brown
1932 Whittlesea-Yea Road, KINGLAKE WEST 3757.

Hello, my name is Holly. I like to write, including stories, and would like to be a cartoonist. I am 10½ yrs with 5 cats, 1 dog, 1 bird, 1 guinea pig.

Holly
C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

Hi, my name is Lily. I am seven years old. I like cooking, swimming, sewing, art & craft and animals. I would like a penpal my own age.

Lily
C/- Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

Hi, my name is Jessie. I live on a farm with two horses, 10 chooks and a duck. I would like someone to write to me, about my age – 8. It can be a girl or a boy. I don't mind boys because I have five brothers. I will write back soon.

Jessie
C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

My name is Black Crow Walking. I live in paradise – Thora Valley near Bellingen NSW. I'm 44, and I'm a singer/songwriter, artist, poet, gardener and writer. I have a psychic healing centre. I set out to travel Australia in my tepee 3 years ago and after many adventures have settled in a place 6 hours away from where I started my journey.

Black Crow Walking,
1709 Darkwood Rd, THORA 2454.
blackcro@turboweb.net.au

Hi, my name is Stephanie. I am 20 years old, vegetarian and a resident of north Qld. I would like male penpals, around my age, with interests in natural health and lifestyle from all over Australia, New Zealand or anywhere. All letters answered.

Stephanie Gibson
35 Thunderbolt Drive,
OAK VALLEY 4811.

Hi! My name is Peter. I am 10 and like to play Nintendo and ride my bike. I play T-ball. I have two cats. I go to cubs and like to play rugby and football at school. I am in Peac and I may be moving house so I will tell you when I get the address.

Peter
C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

Hi, my name is Jason. I would like a penpal aged between 11 and 13, any sex. I love motor bikes and farm animals. I have 3 brothers. I am the middle one. I have 40 cows, 9 chooks, a dog and 2 cats. I live in the bush.

Jason
C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

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GRASSIFIEDS

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PROPERTY FOR SALE

NEW SOUTH WALES

CAPERTEE VALLEY, 25 ac bush, with cabin overlooking this spectacular valley – wildlife galore. Cabin has solar panel, 2 tanks 5000, 3000 litres. Three hours from Sydney. Ideal retreat. $52,000. Ph: 02-6352-5274.

PLEASURE POINT (Sydney), very large flat block of land overlooking George's River, beautiful trees, good area, capital gains potential. $250,000. Ph: 02-9771-2015.

WOOLGOOLGA, 32 sq block & tile house on ¾ ac with beautiful reserve surrounds, mins to shops & surf. $180,000. Ph: 02-6654-1595.

CANBERRA ONE HOUR, 100 ac, semi-complete 2 b/r house, extensions approved, solar power, septic system, 550-tree orchard, fully irrigated, silo, sheds, 2 bores, 5000 gal water tank, sealed rd. $96,000. Ph: 02-6454-4031.

ON QLD-NSW BORDER, on top of range, 3 – 4 km west of Tomewin, ⅜ share in 90 ac. Views to Tweed Valley, Mt Warning to the sth and Currumbin Valley to nth. Shared dam, small shed, cleared at top, bushland below. $60,000. Ph: 07-3369-9034, 0403-322-293.
Email: cruisey@clubcroc.com.au

NIMBIN NSW, share in community, 2 ac in r/forest setting, dwelling consists of 2 tastefully restored railway carriages separated by lge covered deck, 2 – 3 b/rs, 240V elec, water, 10 mins to village. $99,500. Ph: 02-6689-1137, or email: carriages@telstra.easymail.com.au for details & photographs.

'WEJA': 4 b/r, lge kitchen, lge shed, tank water, ph & power. $22,000. Ph: Katy, 02-6975-9039.

VILLAGE COMMUTE, CANBERRA ½ hr, 3 b/r, building, cladded home on ½ ac f/hold, dble garage, town water, gas heating. Relocation sale. Bargain $70,000. Ph: owner, 07-4124-9632.

CENTRAL WEST, 30 mins Orange. Home on almost 5 ac, edge of village. Permanent crk boundary, with trout, platypus. Established fruit & nut orchard. Garden shed, chook & duck houses. Town, well & tank water. Home consists 4 b/rs, huge, sunny family room, new kitchen, walk-in pantry, open plan living. Walk to shops, primary school, buses to high schools. $200,000. Ph: 02-6364-0388 AH for more info & photos.

TAMWORTH, COUNTRY MUSIC CAPITAL, 1000 ac, tranquil hideaway, wildlife, waterfalls, sawmill. New cottage, wood stove, 4WD adventureland, 30 mins to town. $200,000. Ph: 02-6765-6189.

TYALGUM 35 km from Murwillumbah, 10 forested ac with great views of Mt Warning & Border Ranges. Company Title, Zincalum shed, c/van, solar power, ph, lge perm dam, 2 x 10,000 litre tanks, pressure pump, gas hot water, cleared house site. $85,000. Ph: 02-6672-8528, or
email: leonardhight@hotmail.com

GRANDCHESTER, 1 hr Gold Coast/Brisbane, 45 ac, beautiful views, slightly undulating, good soil, 50% cleared grazing, 50% lightly treed, elevated home sites, fully fenced, seasonal crk, dam, power/ph approx 300 m away. Ph: 02-9948-6720 AH.

BARGAIN, KYOGLE SHIRE, 5 ac, 26 km, Casino & Kyogle, power, ph. $19,950. Ph: Kevin, 0401-014-863.

NSW BORDER RANGES, 130 ac, NE aspect, 40 km nth Kyogle, 2 hrs Brisbane, 1½ hrs Byron Bay. Absolute privacy, nat pk on 3 sides, deep rich soil, chemical free. Stunning views, perm crk with swimming hole. School bus at gate, ph avail. Two council-approved steel framed sheds. Selectively cleared with stands of mature trees. Whole block is very accessible. Potential for anything. Reluctant sale. $165,000. Ph: 02-6636-2272.

TENTERFIELD SHIRE, 100 ac, pretty gully, 20 km from Tabulum, crk, dam, building permission, bush, lots of timber & bush rock, lots of wildlife, rural-residential, freehold. $30,000 or swap bus/motorhome with cash difference. Ph: owner, 03-6326-9295. Email owner: aschaar@postoffice.utas.edu.au Or ph local real estate: 02-6736-1136.

MID NORTH COAST, Dorrigo area, cabin on 25 ac, crk, rock pools, r/forest, f/trees, many extras, must sell over Xmas. $70,000 ONO.
Ph: 0408-113-596, 0412-367-923.

CANDELO NEAR MERIMBULA, lge residential block, undulating, beautiful views, $12,000. Ph: 02-6495-7663, or 0427-250-288.

CATHCART, FORTY ACRES, ½ way snow & sea, 1 hr, best trout streams, perm crk. Ideal for fishing cabins. $18,000. Ph: 02-6495-7663, or 0427-250-288.

RAINFOREST, 850 ac, Port Macquarie hinterland, volcanic & alluvial soil, solar-powered cottage, orchard, good cattle & deer fences, deer herd, $345,000. Ph: 02-6585-8353.

TABULAM, HOUSE on 120 ac bush block. Dam, ph, solar power & generator. $50,000. Ph: agent, 02-6666-1261.

GRASSIFIEDS

PROPERTY FOR SALE

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LAGGAN (Southern Tablelands): 1 km from picturesque Laggan village, 400 ac of rolling hills with native pasture & subclover, comfortably carrying 800 Merino wethers. Permanent water; shelter trees incl sml areas of remnant vegetation & wetlands. Power & ph lines through property. Approval for 3 lot subdivision with house sites. Spectacular views. One km sealed road frontage, 1½ hrs nth of Canberra. Private sale. Price $260,000 ONO. Ph: 02-4837-3327.

GREAT ALTERNATE LIFESTYLE opportunity NSW far north coast, 65 ac undulating forest country with beautiful native fauna & flora, about 5 mins to the township of Drake with pub, school & shops etc. Reluctant sale due to ill health. Paid $31,000. Sell for $28,000 ONO. Ph: Chris, 02-4573-1761.

EDEN, NSW SOUTH COAST, 4 b/r house, 40 ac, self-sufficiency, river flats, orchards. Idyllic situation at deep pool near r/forest, surrounded by nat pk. See: www.skelton.com.au/kiahfarm $129,500. Ph: 02-6496-2501.

KANDOS (80 km north of Lithgow), beautiful bush house on 40 ac. Open plan with mezzanine. Permanent spring, crk & well. Solar power with 240V inverter. Outside bath house with LPG instant hot water to kitchen, also LPG fridge. Slab walls polished inside. Louvred windows all around. Furnished. Yabbie dam. Comes with ute, water pump, 2000 gal tank, TEA20 Massey Ferguson tractor, electric cement mixer, petrol mulcher. State forest all around. Untouched native Australian seclusion at its rarest. $99,000. Ph: 02-9399-9297.

LAKE BATHURST VILLAGE, 2.5 ac, 20 mins Goulburn, 50 mins Canberra, 3 – 4 b/r historic post office with slow combustion heating + choice of fuel or electric stove/oven. Established gardens incl 80+ f/trees & vegie patch. Spring-fed well & rainwater tanks. Regretful sale. $112,000 ONO. Ph: 02-9523-6143.

FAR NORTH COAST, 6 yr old Hardiplank, 3 b/r house on 4.2 ac. Permanent rocky crk. Power, ph connected, 40 km Lismore, 21 km Kyogle, 10 km Nimbin. School buses to all schools. $138,000. Ph: Geoff, 02-6689-7205. Best in evenings.

TARALGA/BIG HILL AREA, 440 ac, peaceful valley amid rugged wilderness. Comfortable cottage, early settlers modified. One owner 27 years, special retreat. Goulburn 45 mins, 15 mins schools & services. $180,000. Details, 02-4268-1049, or 02-4840-2238.

BEAUTIFUL BELLINGER VALLEY, 30 mins to Coffs Harbour, freshwater river frontage, mountain & valley views. Country retreat, suit horses, cattle, cropping. Alluvial river flats rising to flood-free slopes, 60 ac with 2 older houses, fencing, cattle yard. Only 4 km from historic Bellingen. $255,000 ONO. Ph: owner, 08-8387-9969, 0407-288-194.

Please print your ad clearly so we can do likewise

DEADLINES: GR143 – DEC 20TH
GR144 – FEB 28TH

TEN YEAR OLD CRAFTSMAN-BUILT, nth facing home, 1½ ac share (on 360 ac), multiple occupancy at Nimbin. Beautiful r/forest, 240V, family orientated community, 26 shareholders. Contact Ed, 02-6689-1608.

INVERELL AREA, big potential, solar cottage with American barn, greenhouse, mudbrick outbuildings, low maintenance acreage, $240 rates. No pollution, good r/fall, bitumen access, organic orchard, vineyard, excel microclimate, wildlife. $130,000. Ph: 02-6723-3459.

LOW COST LAND SHARING, $7000 per site, 80 sites, up to 2 ac each in 1640 ac property, 20 km nth of Port Macquarie, mid north coast NSW. See 'Communities/Shares' ad. Ph: 02-6653-4601. www.skyboom.com/goolawah

MID NORTH COAST, 24 km SW Bellingen, 240 ac with beautiful river frontage, 12 ac largely cleared paddocks, balance eucalypt forest. Tranquil rural retreat. Comfortable cottage 2 b/rs, sleepout, pantry, verandah. $189,000. Ph: 02-6655-1453 for photos & details.

PERFECT COASTAL RETREAT, located 10 mins Maclean, 20 mins Yamba's ocean beaches & nat pks, between Byron Bay & Coffs Harbour, 118 ac natural forest & environmental wetlands running down to perm fresh-water crk (navigable by tinny with direct access to Clarence River & Pacific Ocean). Absolutely magic secret spot with abundant wildlife incl brolgas. $98,000. Adjoining 100 ac, all natural forest $65,000. Ph: Howard 02-6646-3733.

MERIMBULA, 69 ac, exel topsoil, perm crk, possible 850 oz gold, endless grey box, solar bank, house, shed, tractor, all implements. $115,000 ONO. Ph: 02-6495-7663.

BERANGHI ARTS PERMACULTURE COMMUNITY, diverse group of 80 people have purchased 1635 ac property near Crescent Head. Shares, $6550 incl GST. Contact: Helen, 02-6566-0695, Bec, 02-6566-0801, or Michael, 02-6566-1117.

ONE HUNDRED ACRES, NORTHERN NSW, 50% cleared, 40" average r/fall, 4 lge spring-fed dams, 6 water tanks. Fully estab with 2 b/r home, studio, c/ports, tool shed. Two Colorbond sheds 45' x 25' & 30' x 20', 7 stables, yards, feed shed. School bus front gate. $125,000 or $100,000 less some inclusions. Ph: 02-6666-1505.

GEORGICA VIA LISMORE, country cottage, 12½ ac, NE aspect, tanks & well, school bus passes, 20 mins Lismore. $110,000. Ph: 02-6665-3172 AH.

THIRTY KILOMETRES FROM TUMBARUMBA, 297 secluded ac, perpetual lease, building permit, native bush, 10 ac cleared, crk, hydro power potential. $45,000. Ph: 02-6948-3239.

MID-NORTH COAST, 2 ac personal use, 1200 ac shared ownership. Share property with title, r/forest & cleared area. Thumb Creek, near Taylors Arm. $16,000. Ph: 02-4465-1706.

NAMBUCCA VALLEY NSW, 177 ac, lge 3 b/r timber Queenslander, lots of fruit & nut trees, beautiful, garden, perm river through property, swimming holes, r/forest, organic for 20 yrs, currently running cattle. $280,000. Contact owner, 02-6564-4067.

LISMORE REGION, unique circular timber house, & self-contained cabin on landscaped 2 ac Strata Title. Fruit trees, dams, outbuildings. Easy access to schools & bus routes. $79,950. Contact: 02-6633-7012.

INVERELL, FORTY ACRES, high country, views, shed, crk, windmill. $48,000. Owner terms, $2000 dep, $110 pw. Ph: Wayne, 07-3262-6050.

NYBOIDA, 2 b/r mudbrick cottage on 75 ac. Dam, sheds, garden, well set up. $120,000. Offers considered, must sell. Ph: 02-6649-4943.

MID NORTH COAST 3 b/r timber house, 57 ac, privacy, estab f/trees, herb garden, vegies, perm crk. $165,000. Ph: 02-6567-1396.

FAR EAST GIPPSLAND, 351 ac, breeding and/or fattening property. Also potential for vegetable growing. Excellent balance of rich river flats rising to hill & bush country. Good rainfall area, property in 5 titles, fronting both sides of the Cann River. Comfortable 3 b/r residence close to schools & shops. $445,000. Ph: 03-5143-2131.

QUEENSLAND

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND, 10 mins Mt Morgan, 25 mins Rockhampton, 2 x 5 ac blocks. $18,000 each. Ph: 07-4934-0387.

WALLANGARRA, ½ ac land Wallangarra village, 4 m x 2.5 m lockable shed with concrete floor. Foundations, power, ph town water. Handy Tenterfield & Stanthorpe. Views to Girraween Nat Pk. No reasonable offers refused. Swap considered. Ph: 02-4829-0302.

ESCAPE THE RAT RACE! Nestled in scenic valley, 19 ac f/hold block, perm river frontage, flood free, lge liveable shed, electricity & ph, 10 mins to schools & shops, 15 mins west of Ingham. Great buying at $118,000 ONO. Ph: 07-4934-2069, or 07-4938-3827.

ONE HUNDRED ACRES NATURAL TIMBER, modern 2 b/r home, own power supply, 2 dams, 2 x 1000 gal tanks, 3 bay shed, many extras. Power, ph, school bus past front, 31 km from Dalby, on the Moonie Hwy. $90,000. Ph: 04-2906-0590.

RAINFOREST RETREAT: 40 ac, palms, ferns, orchids, giant r/forest trees, eucalypts, crk, waterfalls, wildlife. Colorbond cabin, tank, elec. On top of Conondale Range near Maleny. Ph/fax: 07-3374-1411.

COUNCIL APPROVED MASONRY single-unit dwelling, 50 ac, 15 mins beautiful beach & estuary 1770. Home on sunny hillside. Ten ac flat by road. Large dam. Power & bus at gate. $55,000. David Legge, 07-4974-9470.

COMMERCIAL FREE RANGE EGG FARM, only accredited free range farm in the Bundaberg area, 35 ac, 40 km west Bundaberg, 10 km east Gin Gin. Renovated old Queenslander, estab garden. Owner will train. $285,000. Ph: 07-4157-4139.

GRASSIFIEDS

PROPERTY FOR SALE

QUEENSLAND

OLD QUEENSLANDER 2 b/r, en suite + study, 45 km west of Mackay, 12 ac on the slopes of Mt Toby, overlooking cane fields, with views 40 km to Eungella Ranges. Relocated & completely renovated 10 years ago. Walls, floors, ceilings are original hoop pine. Bull nose verandah on 3 sides with new PNG kwila hardwood floors. Bore pumps to 2000 lt tank gravity feeding house & garden. Six x 12 m steel shed with roller door, 1000 native trees mostly furniture woods planted 7 years ago among remnant r/forest. Seasonal crk. Many f/trees. More photos avail. $230,000. Ph: 07-4959-1416.
Email: jlowe@mackay.matilda.net.au

FOR SALE: FORTY-THREE ACRES natural bush, ideal getaway, 10 mins Agnes Waters, Qld. $35,000 ONO. Ph: 08-9295-1131, or 9295-1033 BH.

MENA CREEK 1 hr from Cairns, 1 ha flat rural residential block. Mountain views, 7 km from shop/school. Excellent potential. $43,000 ONO. Ph: 07-4032-4483, or email: rozh@hotmail.com

TARZALE, ATHERTON TABLELANDS, 13 ac, spectacular 360° views. Comfortable weekender with power, ph & potbelly. Large shed/garage, elec pump from spring to 3 tanks, f/trees, chemical free. $130,000. Ph: 07-4096-5541.

GATEWAY TO THE SOUTH BURNETT: well presented home features estab gardens, low maintenance, ride-on mower, natural bushland with dam, fully fenced 5 ac block, short drive to town. $98,000. Ph: 07-4163-2588. ask for Jan, 07-4163-1861 AH.

FORTY ACRES, undulating, fenced, views, dams, trees, 3 b/r home, sheds, gardens, tractor, machinery, portable yards. Warwick. $165,000. Ph: 07-4667-4940.

FOREST BLOCK, 124 ac half r/forest, half eucalypt etc. Julatten, approx 1 hr nth of Cairns, wet season crk, perm spring. Ridges heavy timber, flats lighter timber. Choice of views. School 2 km. Select area 20 mins Port Douglas. Elevation 1200 ft. World famous climate. Zoned rural residential. $220,000. Ph: 07-4094-1254.

MOUNT PLEASANT 10.5 ac, fertile soil, abundance of trees & wildlife, secluded & private, 10 mins to town, 60 km from Brisbane CBD mostly along a peaceful country road. Set at the foot of 10,600 ha Mt Mee State Forest Park in a very picturesque country. Offering a peaceful lifestyle. Power and ph at the front of the block. Photos & maps avail. $120,000. Ph: Peter, 07-3249-5639 BH, 07-3352-7468 AH.

NEW ENGLAND TABLELANDS – Glen Elgin district, 100 ac. Natural forest block with spring-fed crk & lge granite boulders. Land faces nth/sth & backs onto Butterleaf State Forest. All peace & privacy, 41 km NE Glen Innes. $39,000. Ph: 07-5465-4091 after 6 pm.

Don't forget to include your **area code** with your phone number. It's best to set it out as 00-0000-0000.

PLACING AN AD?
See page 74 for details

INNISFAIL/TULLY, 31 ha, adjoins world heritage. Beautiful views, r/forest, timber, cleared land. Growing passionfruit, taro. Irrigation licence from perm crystal clear river. Estab limes, lychees. Very private, dwelling, elec & ph. Handy primary school. $180,000. Ph: 07-4096-3024.

PIECE OF HISTORY: Qld highest town. Delightful 3 b/r cottage, walk to main st. Almost ½ ac backs onto lovely crk, nice garden, nice town, wood stove, shade area & garage, f/trees. Cool climate. Ravenshoe. $72,000 ONO. Ph: 07-4097-7718.

OWN YOUR OWN MOUNTAIN, Commodore Peak, 318 ac, 10 km Millmerran, 100 km Toowoomba, 2 dams, good fences, 200 ac pasture, remainder bushland. $200,000. Ph: 03-9894-8565.

TROPICAL RETREAT, 25 ac, near Bundaberg, new home, cathedral ceilings, timber linings, open plan, verandahs, views, fenced, orchard, shed, tanks, dams, elec, ph, bus. $98,500. Ph: 07-4155-3745.

CHANCE OF A LIFETIME, 5 ac on crk, power & ph, great views down the valley, 10 mins to local town and 1½ hrs to Brisbane. Full price $32,000 seller terms, $500 full deposit & $85 pw. Ph: Ian, 07-4662-2981, or Wayne, 07-3262-6050.

TARONG: lge 3 b/r home with enclosed sunporch on 5 ac situated top of hill, excel views. Two car parking & workshop below, 2 x 5000 gal poly tanks, tool shed/workshop. Bitumen rd, ph, power, handy shops, hospital, schools. $80,000 ONO. Ph/fax: 07-4164-7272.

WE'RE RETIRING, SUNSHINE COAST HINTERLAND, subtropical fruit orchard, 10 ac, drought-proof, highly productive soil with northerly aspect. Secluded spot, 8 mins Nambour, 20 mins Maroochydore & beaches. High-set 4 b/r home landscaped to attract abundant wildlife. This commercial orchard has 'approved supplier' accreditation + many self-suff f/trees. $350,000 ONO, should not attract GST. Ph: 07-5445-0926.

NATURAL OPEN GRASSLANDS and forest 1250 ac, with long frontage to perm crk & many lge perm natural lagoons. Old shearing shed, power & ph avail. Located 3 hrs Brisbane/Gold Coast/Sunshine Coast in Queensland. Full price $100 per ac ($125,000). Wayne, 07-3262-6050.

QUEENSLAND, THIRTY ACRES FOREST, views, power, ph, shed. $28,000. Vendor terms, 10% deposit $65 pw. Ph: Paul, 07-5429-5001.

RAINFOREST RETREAT & sml camping area 2 km from nat pk, situated on pristine crk. Enviro-friendly, requires partner. This 20 ac property has huge potential in alternative tourism market. Website: www.bushcamp.net or ph: 07-4958-3204.

KOORALBYN HEIGHTS, 39 ac, great views, 1 hr drive Brisbane/Gold Coast. Permanent water, native bush, ideal for organic farming. Schooling handy, sporting activities at resort 1 km. $120,000. Ph: 02-6548-8515.

BEAUTIFUL, PRIVATE VALLEY of 160 ac near Gin Gin in SE Qld. Ideal climate & aspect, frost free around home site, abundant dam water. Dwelling of 30 sq m & 90 sq m house of split-face blocks, 70% completed, 35 varieties of f/trees. Power & ph. Photos avail. $146,000. Ph: 07-4157-2736.

DALBY-CHINCHILLA, 600 ac, natural open forest, perm crk. Suit 30 – 40 breeds. Home needs finishing (roof floor walls only). $95,000. Owner can help with vendor finance on $40,000 dep, balance $145 pw. Ph: Ian, 07-4662-2981, Qld.

PRISTINE RAINFOREST HIDEAWAY property, Yandina, Qld: 28 ac block in Starlight Community. Mostly r/forest with perm crk & lge house site with good Feng Shui. 10,000 gal concrete tank. Secluded & very private. Adjoins 10,000 ac state forest, yet only 10 mins to Bruce Highway & 5 km to town. $75,000. Ph: 07-5472-7244. Email: listenoz@ozemail.com.au

PERFECT QUEENSLAND HIDEAWAY, 21 ac natural pine forest, all-timber weekender cabin with elec & ph connected. All overlooking extra lge perm dam & hidden in middle of the forest. $42,000. Seller terms to anyone with $5000 full deposit & $120 pw. Ph: Wayne, 07-3262-6050.

ONE HUNDRED ACRES FOREST near Dalby Queensland, rugged natural crk fronting undulating open forest country, wildlife galore, 2½ hrs Bri-sbane. $32,000, or with new lge hayshed $34,600. Wayne, 07-3262-6050, Ian, 07-4662-2981.

NO ONE WILL EVER FIND YOU at Bentleigh Station, 650 ac, virgin open forest teeming with wildlife. Home built to lock-up in middle of property, 10 ac of lagoons & long frontage to perm Wilkie Crk. Located 3 hrs Brisbane/Gold Coast. $125,000. Owner will consider home anywhere as full deposit & seller finance balance @ $135 pw. Wayne 07-3262-6050

BUNDABERG HINTERLAND HOBBY FARM, 2 – 3 b/r house, screened in verandah, power, ph, lge shed with tractor & implements, pump & irrigation. Very private selectively cleared 56 ac, 2 titles, 10 mins to town. House located on rolling hills amongst tall gums & ironbarks, estab gardens, f/trees & fertile soil, 3 dams & perm crk. Currently rented. $97,000 ONO. Ph: 07-4974-7147 AH 5pm.

RAINFOREST RETREAT & sml camping area, enviro friendly, requires active partner, must be into garden & Euro travellers, a 2nd language would be an advantage. Ph: 07-4958-3204.

BENARKIN – BLACKBUTT, 12 ac, 10 yr old spacious 3 b/r house, verandahs on 3 sides. Powered, ph, selectively cleared, with plenty of water, big trees & good dam, 1½ hr from Bris. $110,000. Ph: 07-4622-3702, 0412-032-069.

VICTORIA

CAVENDISH: 3 b/r house, 7½ ac. Southern Grampians Shire, red gum country, mountain view, overlooking Wannon River. Town water supply, BIRs, WI pantry, 2 toilets, shedding incl 30' x 18' garage with LU bay. $80,000.
Ph: 03-5574-2251.

GRASSIFIEDS

PROPERTY FOR SALE

VICTORIA

BENAMBRA AREA, lge country home on 1½ ac of trees & lawn, 4 b/rs, 2 bathrooms lge lounge with gas heating, kitchen & dining area with new dishwasher, ample cupboards. As-new carpet. Sunroom, lge laundry, c/port & garden shed. Excellent water with bore to 145 ft, & r/water tanks. Price on enquiry. Ph: 03-5159-1271, 03-5159-9237 AH.

EAST GIPPSLAND, 6½ ac, made road, views, dam, ph & power avail, 900 lt tank, machine shed 40' x 20' x 9 – set up as weekender. Plus lots more. Two-thirds property natural bush, VG fencing, 15 mins Baimsdale. $65,000. Ph: 03-9727-2653.

INGLEWOOD, TWENTY UNDULATING ACRES, fenced, grazing, cultivation, mg dam, 3 mins sealed rd prosperous town, shed, unfinished weekender. $25,000. Ph: 03-5438-3436.

FAR EAST GIPPSLAND, 351 ac, breeding and/or fattening property. Also potential for vegetable growing. Excellent balance of rich river flats rising to hill & bush country. Good rainfall area, property in 5 titles, fronting both sides of the Cann River. Comfortable 3 b/r residence close to schools & shops. $445,000. Ph: 03-5143-2131.

DELIGHTFUL MUDBRICK COTTAGE surrounded by mature garden, set on 15 ac, part of a 700 ac organic farm & retreat centre at W-tree 26 km from Buchan in East Gippsland. Solar power, wood stove for heating, hot water & cooking, bottle gas for cooking & fridge. Low living costs & maintenance. Borders on to state forest. Price $83,000. Work & business oppos avail at the centre. Contact Chloe on 03-9525-8712, or email chloe_lovelidge@hotmail.com

COZY OLD HOUSE IN HARROW, breathtaking views, several animal enclosures, lge garage, c/port, cottage garden, many roses, nearly 5½ ac, 2 b/rs, s/c heater, r/c air cond. $89,000 ONO. Ph: 03-5588-1287.

VICTORIAN HIGH COUNTRY, CASSILIS: 17 ac native bush block heavily timbered, 45 mins from ski fields at Mt Hotham, 20 mins from the townships of Swifts Creek & Omeo. Cleared house pad, dam, bridge & easy access all seasons. Excellent views from top of block. Abundant native wildlife & quiet natural surroundings. $26,500 ONO. Ph: 03-5159-4584.

WE HAVE A MOUNTAIN RETREAT on 4 ac at the eastern end of the Strzelecki Range, Carrajung, waiting for a caring buyer. A 2 b/r steel framed log house set in temperate r/forest: ornamental gardens, lge deciduous trees & sml dam. Large open plan living, slow combustion wood heating in river stone fireplace. Gas cooking & hot water, air conditioning. Timber cathedral ceilings, wide verandahs, walk-in pantry & B/I wardrobes. Outbuildings & abundant wildlife, 30 mins from shopping centres. $120,000. Ph: 03-5194-2336.

ST ARNAUD, TWENTY ACRES, dam, fenced, 5 km from town, power avail. $19,950 ONO. Ph: 03-5794-1837.

DEADLINES: GR143 – DEC 20TH
GR144 – FEB 28TH

PEACE AND SECLUSION, 12½ ac, approx 5 cleared, rest natural bush, backing onto forest, central Gippsland (15 mins from Moe & Morwell). Spacious homestead, shedding, good water storage. $100,000. Ph: John Kerr & Associates Real Estate, Moe, 03-5127-7133.

CENTRAL VICTORIA (Bealiba), lovely 10 ac bush block, wildlife, good access, 2 dams, elec & building permit avail. $15,000. Ph: 03-9736-1072.

MITTA MITTA – 16 ac, NE Vic, 85 km Wodonga, livable shed, solar 12V & water, estab garden & orchard, pasture, native forest abuts, good water. $ offers invited. Ph: agent, 02-6056-2800, or owner, 0419-922-389.

DAYLESFORD/GLENLYON, 'NARNIA', this spacious mudbrick & timber home is beautifully & environmentally sited overlooking 2 dams on a 5 ac clearing in 80 ac of handsome bushland. Bounded by state forest & the Loddon River (pumping rights), the 6 b/r home is sturdy & impressive with exposed beams, tree trunk poles, 2 bathrooms, feature spa, solid fuel heaters & iron stove with deluxe gas stove & beautifully presented. Top of the range solar system – free power, free water, free firewood. Huge kangaroo-proof vegie garden, f/trees, herb garden. Definitely self-suff. Many rare wildlife species. Seclusion, peace & quiet, only 3 mins from general store & 10 – 15 mins from Daylesford. Yes, this *is* the great escape – very appealing property & lifestyle. Oh! and a 2 b/r bungalow for visitors. $345,000. Ph: LJ Hooker, 47 Vincent Street, DAYLESFORD. Ph: 03-5348-3429.

TASMANIA

WEETAH (7 km from Deloraine), scenic valley, mountain views, 20 ac – ½ pasture – ½ bush; 2 – 3 b/r timber home, perm water, fertile ground, f/trees, berries, vegie gardens, nth facing. Powered by 6.5 kw generator, power at road. Devonport ½ hr, Launceston 45 mins. $115,000 ONO. Ph: 03-6362-3510.

IDA BAY TASMANIA, 179 ac native bushland adjacent to Ida Bay State Res, 6 km from Hastings Caves thermal pool area & Hastings Caves State Reserve. Close to South-West World Heritage Area. Power, bitumen rd, 1½ hrs sth of Hobart. Ph: 03-6298-1110.

COLLINSVALE, 30 mins from Hobart. Two houses for the price of one, set on 131 ac in a peaceful wooded valley in the mountains. Built for a community, this very lge home comprises a split-level passive solar design main house with 5 lge b/rs, darkroom & workshop, linked by an enclosed walkway to a renovated self-contained cottage with 3 b/rs. Phone, gas, elec, wood stove & combustion heaters, several outbuildings, chook run, perm spring, dam, 2 crks, forest walking tracks. $230,000. See www.eisa.net.au/~pchandle/ for more details. Ph: Lorraine, 03-6239-0405.

GAWLER, NORTH-WEST TAS, mudbrick & celery top pine solar house on 5 ac. Set in scenic rural surroundings only 5 mins from Ulverstone, 3 b/rs, family room, lounge, lge kitchen & built-on garage. Celery top pine windows, blackwood cupboards & timber ceilings throughout. Passive solar supplemented by wood heater, solar hot water. 18,000 gal concrete water tanks + bore. Established vegie garden on fertile basalt soil, poultry sheds, barn & good fences. $140,000. Ph: 03-6425-2922, mobile, 0418-371-093.

'THE SWALLOWS' AT FALMOUTH: A lovely, 4 b/r, mudbrick home on 2 ac with cottage gardens, courtyard, shed/garage & c/port, 5 mins walk to ocean beach, 25 mins to St Helens. $125,000. Ph: 0418-589-309 AH.

NORTH-WEST, WILMOT, 35 mins Devonport, 18 ac, paddocks & forest, 3 b/r character house, comb/stove, lounge wood heater, c/ports, several outbuildings. Ideal alternative lifestyle, lovely gardens, excel views, $72,000. Ph: 03-6492-1369.

PRIVATE BUSH RETREAT, unique self-suff home, 84 ac: r/forest, crks, pasture, NE Tasmania. $165,000. Ph: 03-6354-1030, or 03-6354-6301. View at www.australiarealty.com reference F130026.

HUON VALLEY, for sale: Spectacular mountain retreat on 370 ac, 40 mins from Hobart. Spring water from your kitchen tap. Ph Adriane on 03-6264-2800 BH.
Web: www.dovetaildesign.com.au

NORTH-EAST TASMANIA, secluded retreat, 89 ha f/hold, convertable to 3 titles. River flats on Great Musselroe River surrounded by native state forest. Good soil, water, fishing, wildlife & privacy. Small 3-room cabin. Very rare property. Price $80,000 ONO. Ph: Ron, 03-6394-7323.

TYNE VALLEY EAST OF BEN LOMOND, 50 ac with hut by the river, ultimate peacefulness. $63,000. Ph: 03-6376-2253.

TASMANIA'S NORTH-WEST, ESCAPE to 74 ha r/forest retreat, air that rejuvenates body & spirit; tranquillity, seclusion, treefern-lined crks, sassafras, myrtles, blackwoods, 50 mins airport, 25 mins sea, breathtaking views over valley, NW aspect, sheltered, 4 b/r unique home, studio, outbuildings, alt power, estab organic garden/100+ f/trees. Reluctant sale. $165,000. Ph: 03-6437-0943 for brochure/email.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

PEACEFUL 445 ha white gum jarrah, creeks, dam & Albany Hwy frontage. Small area cleared. Under 1 hr to city. Wonderful for solitude or sharing. $280,000. Ph: 08-9838-3657.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

TUMBY BAY, 167 ha, 30 km NW, undulating loam soils, all arable, 3 b/r stone home, ample shedding, suit olives, cropping. Quiet country lifestyle, 16" r/fall. $148,000. Ph: 08-8688-9117.

Don't forget the deadline if wishing to advertise in Grass Roots

GRASSIFIEDS

PROPERTY FOR SALE

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

TAILEM BEND, 4 b/r handyman's home on 21½ ac, lge kitchen/living area, lge TV/rumpus/sewing room, 2 toilets 2 bath/r, office, attic, pantry, cellar. Old sheds, stable, chook yard, plenty of trees, 2 km to river, 1 hr Adelaide. $59,000. Ph: Elders, 08-8572-4011, owner, 08-8572-4143.

PORT NEILL, highway frontage close to beaches, 40 mins Pt Lincoln, 575 ha, all cropping, nice home, heaps shedding. $280,000. Ph: 08-8688-9117.

EYRE PENINSULA SA, 55 km NW Cummins, 1½ hrs Port Lincoln. Business and/or lifestyle opportunity, 400 mm r/fall, f/hold. Cottage, shearing shed, 9 x 18 m implement shed, r/water, borewater, windmill (16,000 gal storage), 240V power. 1140 ha: 210 arable, 230 semi-cleared, 150 open grazing, 80 regrowth, 70 natural scrub, 400 heritage. Enjoy unpolluted sunsets, abundant native wildlife, native flowers, bushland. Sheep/grain production but ideal for environmentalists, organic enterprises, bush tucker etc. Great location to get away from pollution & control your own environment. $190,000 ONO. Ph: Michael & Caryll Cabot, 08-8688-5063.

ADELAIDE (32 km from), home on 3.7 ac, vegan gardens, f/trees, space galore, suit 2 families. Info send 2 x 45c stamps. $285,000 ONO. Ph: 08-8389-2372.

COMMUNITY/SHARES

DORRIGO, 1/7 share 120 ac, estab MO, mostly r/forest, river border. Double storey, 3 b/r timber home, builder built, ¾ completed (to lock-up). Beautiful views, excel access, bore water, tanks, 240V, new HWS. Includes 1/7 fertile cleared paddock with hothouse, 15 mins Dorrigo. $62,500. Ph: 02-6653-8266.

NORTHERN NSW, 5 ac on a 330 ac MO community close to Nimbin & Lismore, 2 house sites, shed, tank & sml dam, great views of Lillian Rock & Blue Knob. $23,000 ONO. Ring Penny, 02-6689-7584.

SHARES IN LARGE INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY nth of Port Macquarie, 5 km from ocean, next to Limeburners Nat Pk. Sponsored by Bundagen Community (Coffs Harbour). Membership to Goolawah Co-op is via $7000 share. Undulating land with various soils, sandy to good topsoil, 200 ac cleared (on hills), 25 shares sold. See ad in 'NSW' section. Ph: Peter, 02-6566-0087. www.skyboom.com/goolawah.

FAR NORTH COAST, 1/28 share on 1000 ac MO. Home, sheds, nursery, beautiful gardens, crk, wildlife refuge. $85,000. Ph: 02-6633-3304, or 02-6633-3210.

CAUTION

Readers are cautioned to use common sense when replying to any ads and be sure of what they are getting in return for their money. If in doubt, check with the Office of Fair Trading.

PLACING AN AD?
See page 74 for details

MAGNIFICENT VIEWS Mt Warning to Byron, 1400 m elevation, 30 km NW Lismore. Established community, 535 ac, 17 shares, lge pole home, forested, private, f/trees, abundant wildlife. $50,000. Ph: 02-6688-0085.

PROPERTY WANTED

NORTH NSW – QUEENSLAND, Mullumbimby to Sunshine Coast, 1 – 10 ac land only. Max 10 km from coast. Ph: 02-6649-2870.

HOUSE ON FIVE TO TEN ACRES or more. Area to be between Wollongong & Mittagong to Katoomba & Gosford inclusive. Seller's terms to be maximum $5000 deposit with up to $250 per week till balance paid. Ph/fax: 02-4228-1393.

HOUSE AND LAND IN TASMANIA, 20 ac +, mostly uncleared, r/forest/old growth preferred. Must have either river/lge crk/estuary or lge well estab dam. Grid power essential. Martin & Jan, PO Box 35, SUTHERLAND, NSW 1499.

LAND WITH ANY TYPE OF DWELLING. $20,000. Northern Tablelands NSW, or Tasmania. Remote area preferred. Ph: 02-6732-6893. PO Box 611, GLEN INNES 2370.

FOR RENT CARETAKER WANTED

HONEST, HARDWORKING PEOPLE with 'clean' environmental values wanted, with view to settling permanently on large, isolated property. Permanent water avail, but must be willing to start from 'scratch' & fit in with nature. References a must. Write: K Scholes, PO Box 128, SOUTH GRAFTON, NSW 2460.

ATTRACTIVE FARMHOUSE for rent part exchange for permaculture duties. School bus nearby. At Eungella, 100 km from Mackay, suit couple/single with children. Occupancy 6th February 2001, references required. Ph: 07-4721-4179 to 22nd December. Ph: 07-4958-4631 after 22nd Dec.

KEMPSEY 3 b/r timber house, 57 ac, herb garden, vegies, perm crk. $130 pw. Ph: 02-6567-1396.

FOR RENT: 40 ac secluded mountaintop, 45 mins Hobart, 15 mins shops, sml 1 b/r house, shed, dam, looking for right person to help maintain property in exchange for rent. Ph: Chris, 0400-831-476.

PERSON(S) TO SHARE/RENT house, c/van, secluded Hunter bush block, 60 km Newcastle, infinitely negotiable. Ph: 02-4938-2036.

LARGE COMFORTABLE MUDBRICK HOUSE, 3 b/rs & studio on beautiful property, 30 mins from Taree, mid nth coast. No animals. $130/wk. Ph: Kathy, 02-6551-2240.

RESPONSIBLE, RELIABLE CARETAKER wanted for camel farm in Tasmania from April – October 2001, should have experience with larger animals, eg horses. For further info ph: 03-6260-6335.

JIMBOOMBA (50 km from Brisbane): Caretakers wanted 3 b/r house. Rent reduction in exchange for light duties looking after farm animals. Rent reduction to nil when owners absent from property. Background in arm animals preferred. Call Beaudesert, 07-5543-1447.

BUSINESS FOR SALE

HUGE GROWTH POTENTIAL, solar and alternative energy specialists. One owner, estab 13 yrs, exclusive dealership (9 national companies). Ongoing service work in excess of 1000 clients. Business $52,000 & SAV. Freehold & business $130,000 + SAV. Ph/fax: 02-6642-3311.

CANDLE MANUFACTURING, ideal home-based business, equipment, stock. Great potential. $9500. Box 1712, BUNDABERG 4670. Ph: 07-4157-9621.

POST OFFICE – mail run – general store - freehold: Solid brick residence, small country north-east Victoria, 30 mins Murray River, central to 4 major towns, wheat & sheep country, very nice climate. Income $4200 pm. Price $180,000 plus SAV. Ph; 03-5764-4200 after 4 pm every day. Mobile: 0428-884-703 any time.

HOME BUSINESS FOR SALE:Acropol Mudgard is simply the best render product available for earth builders. Nontoxic, economical & it has been a success story for over 14 years. We recently bought the company & after spending time preparing new marketing materials, we now find that other pressing business issues prevent us devoting needed energy to market this excellent product, so the business is again for sale. $6500 incl stock, artwork etc. Ph: 07:5423-0180.

WANTED TO RENT/CARETAKE

COUPLE, 2 young children, seek accom northern NSW in exchange for work, from Jan 01. Ph: 08-8276-3323.

MALE, FORTY-FIVE, single, honest, handyman type, would like to rent sml property in nth Qld. Ph: John, 07-3806-0773.

OPPORTUNITIES

AMAZING INTERNET FARMING; sell digital cattle & digital crops & earn up to $10,000+ a day. So easy anyone can do it. Ph: 02-6842-2841. www.skybusiness.com/breck

LAVENDER FARM, KURRAJONG, seeks 2 people to harvest lavender in January for 4 days. Free board & lodging for 8 days. Suit couple. References required. Ph: 02-4572-2187.

WRITERS WANTED, for a new magazine based on historical stories (pre 1979). For guidelines & information send SSAE to: Other Generations, PO Box 5, ERINDALE, ACT 2903.

STEP INTO THE FUTURE with optimum health, wealth, & happiness. Let me show you how to create wealth – you do the rest. Ph: 02-6254-9565. Address: 1 Moorehead Pl, LATHAM, ACT 2615.

GRASSIFIEDS

OPPORTUNITIES

HOBBY FARM, live-in accommodation $25 per week, n/s, share in work & produce. Single parent OK. Casual work avail grape & fruit district. Farm vehicle avail. Write: Danny, PO Box 95, BALLANDEAN 4382.

WANTED FEMALE, NONSMOKER, to assist on promotional tour of Aust, 3 months, March 2001. Like meeting people, travel & early rising. Assets would be laptop, photography, writing. Write to: Colin Statham, 8/20 Banks Ave, TWEED HEADS 2485.

WANTED – INDEPENDENT PEOPLE with own transport to share alternative lifestyle. One hundred ac bush with organic fruit & veg. For more info please contact: Ruth, PO Box 9, KINGSTOWN, NSW 2358. Ph: 0419-634-368.

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS, MAGAZINES on almost every subject. Also fiction titles. Preloved & new. Free monthly catalogues avail. Bookmania, Box 496E, MORISSET 2264. Ph: 02-4977-1296, or visit our webssite at: www.bookmania.com.au

STEINER HOME SCHOOLING? A teaching manual by Alan Whitehead on Creativity and Curriculum. Send $12 to: Golden Beetle Books, Box 329, BLACKHEATH 2785. Ph: 02-4787-5335, fax: 02-4787-5339. Visa-Mastercard.
www:users.bigpond.com/goldenbeetlebooks/

'STRAWBALE HOMEBUILDING'. $15. Ph: 07-4668-9500.

'NATIVE STINGLESS BEES' for profit or pleasure – how to get started, pollination/honey potential in Queensland. Detailed info booklets, packed with photographs, diagrams. For free catalogue, send name, address & 45 c stamp to: ANBRC, Box 74-G4, NORTH RICHMOND 2754.

'NIMBIN NEWS MAGAZINE', is a co-operatively run access magazine with articles & information from Nimbin and other areas. We cover concerns relevant to alternative lifestylers & others looking for the most sustainable way. We are one of the longest running alternative magazines & the Nimbin bioregion is at the forefront in the development of sustainable systems. As networkers we scan many mags for suitable & scarce information for our readers. Subscription: 6 editions for $18, sample $3.50. Back copies 5 for $12 posted. PO Box 209, NIMBIN 2480.

'NEW VEGETARIAN & NATURAL HEALTH', the magazine of the Natural Health & Vegetarian Societies. Subscribe today, $30 yearly and receive: 4 vital magazines, discounts at participating health food stores and natural therapies practitioners, listed in magazine. Head Office, 28/541 High St, PENRITH, NSW 2750. Ph: 02-4721-5068.

'WHY FARM RABBITS?': Shed design, breeding, health, nutrition, set-up cost, costs, returns, breeding program. Ph: 02-6558-8287.

FIFTY 'AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY CRAFT/ DECORATION' magazines. No 1 – Vol 9 No 4, VGC. $180. Ph: 07-4668-9500.

DEADLINES: GR143 – DEC 20TH
GR144 – FEB 28TH

HOME EDUCATION for info send SSAE to: Alternative Education Resource Group, PO Box 71, CHIRNSIDE PARK 3116.

BOOKS, NEW AND OLD. Australiana, lifestyle, Pacific, biography, horticulture, gardening, outdoors. Lists avail. BA & JM Wallace, Box 325, PORTLAND 3305.

FOOD & KITCHEN

STONE GROUND FLOUR, in-home, with a SCHNITZER German quality hand or electric stone mill, 10 models, from $178. Send SAE for info, add $5 for video. SCHNITZER MILLS, PO Box 1867, BOWRAL 2576. Ph: 02-4861-1581, fax: 02-4861-1249. Visit our website at www.schnitzer.com.au

BEE POLLEN, no additives, 450 g sample pack $11. 1.9 kg pack $38.50, 4.3 kg pack $77, 14 kg drum $203.50. Prices include p&p & GST. A & M Sciberras, PO Box 15, RAMCO 5322.

HOME STONE FLOUR MILLS – mill your own stoneground wholemeal flour for cakes and bread at home with a Retsel Little Ark stone flour mill. Endorsed by Housewives Association. Write for catalogue to: Retsel Distributors, PO Box 712, DANDENONG 3175, encl 3 postage stamps. Ph: 03-9795-2725. Distributor enquiries welcome.
www.retsel.com.au

MISCELLANEOUS

TWO CARPENTERS AVAILABLE: specialising in mudbrick structure, carpentry & joinery. Also design, manufacture & installation of staircases for individual needs. Ph: 03-5772-2600.

YABBIES, clean dams naturally, fun for kids, great food. We can supply or use your local native stock. Booklet avail for $18 incl postage & handling. Ph: 07-5423-5260.

WANTED, SINCERE BELIEVERS to study '*The Big Picture*' of Bible prophecy. Details, ph: 03-6491-2408. Eleventh-Hour Ministry, Box 212, SHEFFIELD, Tas 7306.

BHUDEVI, THE PUREST GOODIES on the Planet! At reduced prices. www.bhudevi.com.au Ph: 07-5527-6828.

HOW TO MAKE MONEY selling & making chess pieces, bird baths, fine art, gnomes etc. Plaster and/or cement moulds. For methods & catalogue send $14.95 to: Williams Imports, PO Box 989, SOUTHPORT 4215 (06/50 Railway St). Ph/fax: 07-5532-9050.

HEALTH & BEAUTY

ALL NATURAL – HANDMADE – moisturising creams, lip balms, heavy duty creams, soaps & polishes. Beeswax-based products. Brochure SAE: Moorebee, J Products, 70 George St, WOODFORD, Qld 4514.

ESSENTIAL OILS, very high quality, emu oil & neem oil, w/sale, retail. Mackay Ti-Tree Oil. Ph/fax: 07-4943-0570.

ALCHEMY CONCEPTS, CANDLES, SOAPS & body products. Handmade using age old methods. Retail & wholesale. Ph/fax: 02-4934-8301. PO Box 70, MEDOWIE 2318.

OLIVE LEAF EXTRACT, nature's antibiotic, help for many ailments, $15/200 ml, J Schloss, MS 71, MURGON 4605.

BUCKWHEAT PILLOWS FOR MEDIATION, yoga & sleeping. Australian-grown buckwheat husks, no herbicides or pesticides. 100% Australian cotton cover. $49.50 incl postage. Just Natural Ventures: 03-9481-1872. Email: justnatural@bigfoot.com

ORGANICALLY GROWN TRADITIONAL HERBAL remedies for everyday conditions, arthritis, psoriasis etc. For catalogue please send stamped self-addressed envelope to: Tintagel Herbs, PO Box 27, CENTRAL TILBA, NSW 2546.

BEE-RELIEVEDTM, a natural alternative for the treatment of degenerative joint disorders that really works! (Testimonials available.) Bee-RelievedTM, from New Zealand's only Bio-Gro certified beekeepers, contains Glucosamine (a natural compound produced by the body for the maintenance of joint cartilage & connective tissue) and Melittin (a powerful anti-inflammatory agent). Bee-RelievedTM 110 x 500 mg capsules (1 month's supply at recommended dosage), are now avail at the reduced price, due to the weak New Zealand dollar, of $24.95*. Bee-RelievedTM 300 x 500 mg capsules, 3 month's supply, incl FREE bonus Propolis Mouth Spray (worth $9.95) are $74.85**. Bee-RelievedTM from: OutMarket, Suite 221, 353 King St, NEWTOWN, NSW 2042. Ph/fax: 02-9550-5553. *plus P&H of $4.95, ** plus P&H of $5.50. Cheque or money orders only made out to: OutMarket Pty Ltd.

ZAPPY NAPPY 'Nappies that don't cost the Earth'. Made of 100% cotton flannelette. One size fits newborn to trainers. Waterproof/breathable overpants, extra liners, patchwork bunny rugs, premature infant nappies and doll nappies. All of our products are quality Australian made. To order please tel/fax: 07-5442-8033, or write to: Zappy Nappy, PO Box 260, EUMUNDI, Qld 4562. Wholesale Distributors are required in most areas. Please contact Zappy Nappy for more info.

LUXURIOUS SOAP & SHAMPOO BARS, handmade with 100% pure plant oils. Free from synthetic additives. Wholesale enquiries also welcome. Send SAE for free brochure: Homesteaders, PO Box 523, Warwick, Qld 4370, www.flexi.net.au/~homesteaders

CARAVAN & FIBRO ANNEXE, permanently located Potato Point, far sth coast NSW. Great hillside position facing beach, no others near, shaded, bush surrounds. Reasonable site fees. $600 ONO. Ph: Karen, 02-6685-3521.

TWELVE VOLT FRIDGE, 140 lt, $600. Generator, Honda 2.2 KVA, $650. Inverter, $100. Gas fridge, 120 lt, $150. Ph: 02-6352-5274.

Make your editor smile –
Punctuate when writing ads for Grass Roots Grassifieds

GRASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE

HANDMADE PURE VEGETABLE OIL SOAPS. These natural soaps are suitable for people who have sensitive or problem skin. For a product brochure send SAE to: Bushcraft Soaps, Lot 3 Counter Rd, M/S 591, GYMPIE 4570. Ph: 07-5486-7299.

SAVINIA FLOOR WEAVING LOOM, 150 cm CB/CM, $1500. Ph: 02-4946-8079, Judy.

STONE GROUND FLOUR MILL, brand – Samap, Horbourg 68,600. Normal 240V. Done very little work – ground no more than 50 kg. In excel condition. New price $1200, our price $600. Ph: Audrey: 07-4667-0114.

HAD ENOUGH OF FLAT BATTERIES in your flashlights? Well no more expensive batteries. Dynamo hand-powered flashlights. Battery-free, works when you need it most! Ninety day money-back guarantee! $25 incl postage: Send cheque/money order to: DA Van Zanten, PO Box 170, URUNGA 2455. Ph: 02-6655-6604. http://www.australianexport.com.au

COURSES

PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE, courses in Sydney, December 4 – 5 and January 18 – 19. Nonresidential courses, qualified and experienced teacher, Permaculturalist and Horticulturalist plus guest speakers. Includes visits to gardens & properties in the Sydney area & hands-on practical experience. For information & booking contact: Ryde TAFE Business Centre on 02-9448-6301.

STONE WORK COURSE, April 13, 14, 15, 16: 3 days, 4th day optional, no extra. BYO tent, food, mason's hammer, trowel, & scutch. Situated 2 hrs Brisbane on 260 ac of wilderness with swimming hole. 3 styles 3 mediums, only 8 – 10 persons for best results. $400. Ph: 07-4661-7410.

CORRESPONDENCE STUDIES. Diploma and certificate programmes, professionally recognised. Learn for personal interest or business practice. Select one brochure from: Aromatherapy, Vitamin & Nutrition Therapy, Traditional Folk Medicine, Animal Medicine (The 'Green' Vet), Psychic Healing, Preschool Childcare, Safety & Security Counselling, Personal Psychic Development, Traditional Wicca. New course: 'Herbs For All Ways And Always'. Wiccan Home Studies, PO Box 138, SURRY HILLS 2010. Ph: 02-9319-6166 BH only.

PERMACULTURE – sustainable living & self-reliance. Courses & workshops with Robyn Francis & others, garden tours & resource centre, **FREE** copy of 2000 YEARBOOK. Contact: Djanbung Gardens Permaculture Centre, NIMBIN, ph/fax: 02-6689-1755.

Advertisers please remember to include <u>all</u> preferred contact details within your ad and include them in your word count. Phone numbers do need an area code included.

PLACING AN AD?
See page 74 for details

PERMACULTURE DESIGN COURSES with Rick & Naomi Coleman, PEDS. Next course March 2001. See ad this issue. Call Naomi, 03-5664-3301 for info.

GARDEN & ORCHARD

AS SEEN ON 'GARDENING AUSTRALIA': Paul Recher's Fruit Spirit Botanical Garden, DORROUGHBY 2480, over 500 species avail as viable seed. For list mail 4 x 50 stamps to above address, or website: fruitspirit.com.au

FREE SEEDS: I have over 30 varieties of tomato seeds & numerous pumpkin seeds as well. Free to anyone willing to grow them out & keep passing on the seeds. Send an SAE to: Arthur Fergusson, 14 Long Gully Rd, GRANDCHESTER 4340. I'm a pensioner, so cannot send seeds without your SAE.

GOURDS, SEEDS, BOOKS AVAILABLE NOW! In our new catalogue. Send 4 stamps to: The Gourd Father, PO Box 298 GR, EAST MAITLAND 2323. SPECIAL OFFER! Book on growing & drying gourds plus 2 pkts seeds mixed, 1 sml & 1 lge, plus free catalogue, $27.90 incl p&h & GST.

COMPANION PLANTING CHART: over 90 vegetables, herbs and fruits, including plants as insect repellents. Sow when Chart: Suggested sowing times for 100 vegetables, herbs and flowers. Mail order $7 each + $3 p&p. Plum Products (G), PO Box 120, Wards Rd, TAMBO UPPER, 3885.

BAMBOO PLANTS, lge range, best prices. Ph: 07-4129-4470, fax: 07-4129-0130.

BAMBOO: PLANTS – BOOKS – FLOORING, 250 species, running or clumping, 15 titles bamboo books. Bamboo flooring boards now in stock. Send $4.50 in stamps for catalogue. Bamboo Australia, BELLI PARK, Qld 4562.
Email: bamboo@bamboo.02.com.au

RAINFOREST SEED COLLECTORS national link-up. Buy and sell local seed. Our newsletter has lots to offer. Local seed grows better and doesn't pollute your gene pool. Quarterly newsletter subs $20, concession $10. Offer local seed – free subs. RSC, Private Mail Bag, BELLINGEN 2454. Ph: 02-6655-2233.

TREE GUARDS all shapes/sizes from under 10 cents each. Bamboo stakes and goat hair mulch mats. International Reforestation Supplies, 510 Bellbird Rd, BAIRNSDALE 3875. Ph/fax: 03-5157-9404.

HOLIDAYS

ISLAND HOLIDAY HOUSE, comfortable – 4 b/rs bbqs, hot tubs, canoes. Ph: 07-3409-1960. See www.canoeworld.com (no au)

FINCH HATTON GORGE, Eungella Nat Pk Qld. Platypus bush camp, camping & tree huts, great walking area, the alternative holiday. Ph: 07-4958-3204. Web site: www.bushcamp.net

MORUYA – FAR SOUTH COAST NSW, bush cabins, romantic 1 b/r and family 2 b/rs. Big open fires. Horses, dogs welcome by arrangement. $275 per week, $110 per weekend. Ph: 02-4474-2542.

WYNDHAM AREA, very private secluded area, acreage homestead, budget rates, mountain area, adjoins nat pk, abundant wildlife. Accommodates up to 6 persons. Bega 40 km, 30 km from Merimbula, beaches. Ph: Phyllis, 02-6494-2175, or leave message on answer phone.

LAMINGTON GLEN, r/forest retreat, secluded cabin – everything supplied except food. Ph: 07-5544-8166.

SERVICES OFFERED

'I CHING' – ask the oracle – Chinese Wisdom system. I have a degree (BFA with minor in Philosophy) & am researching this subject, $5 covers my expenses & will send you a short explanation & reading. Send SAE to: Philosopher, PO Box 407, DELORAINE, Tas 7304.

'COME ON TOUR', look & learn. A demonstration farm, a living classroom. 'Simply Natural Organic Farm'. See organic food production using natural methods, regenerative practices, permaculture principles, strategies & techniques. Educational tours: guided informative tours (minimum of 2 people) $7 per person – by appointment. Ph to book: 07-5445-9034. Jade & Paul Woodhouse, 'Simply Natural Organic Farm', 413 Highland Rd, EUDLO 4554, Sunshine Coast, Qld.

DO YOU GROW HERBS? St Arnaud essential oils will distil your small or large quantities of herbs for you. For more details, ph Colin 03-5495-2556, or John 03-5495-2424,
Email: staessoils@hotmail.com

HOME PLANS. 'The Earth Builders Plan Catalogue' (180 pages): 92 plans for hand-crafted buildings (83 homes and 9 workshops, cabins, and carports) of mud brick, rammed earth, stone, poleframe, timber, poured earth, strawbale, construction details; usable sample working of a home (12 x A3 sheets). Mail $75 (p&p incl) to: John Barton – Building Design, 31 Sharp St, NEWTOWN, Vic 3220. Email: jbarton@pipeline.com.au enquiries to ph/fax: 03-5222-5774 for fixed quote to draw and document your home plan. Bankcard, Visa, Mastercard, cheques accepted. Free brochure available.

HANDCRAFTS

NATURAL GEMSTONE JEWELLERY, pendants from $7.50, necklaces from $20. Send 3x45c stamps for descriptions and prices to: C Hunter, 54 Maidstone St, RINGWOOD 3134.

Don't forget the <u>deadline</u> if wishing to advertise in Grass Roots

GRASSIFIEDS

HANDCRAFTS

BUNDLES OF STRANDED COTTON available. Stranded cotton in bundles of 100* 8m skeins in 50 assorted colours. $20 post free. Colours matched to dmc numbers. The Big Bundle of Stranded Cotton of 240 colours – $50 post free. Send 45 cent stamp for free price list. Bankcard, Mastercard, Visa, money order, cheques. Arty & Crafty, PO Box 40, DAW PARK, SA 5041. Ph: 08-8277-3763. Fax: 08-8277-9402.

LIVESTOCK

ORGANIC ANIMAL FEED, grain and fertiliser. We freight anywhere. Also seeking distributors. Kurrajong Organic, ph Morgan Kurrajong in CANBERRA on 02-6230-4846.
Email: morgan@ko.inspired.net.au
www.kurrajongorganic.inspired.net.au

ANIMAL NATUROPATHY – GREENPET, distance consultations. Free mail-order catalogue. Biggest range of natural pet care products Aust-wide. Ph/fax: 07-5485-3468. PO Box 144, TEWANTIN, Qld 4565. www.ezeonline.com.au /greenpet. Email: greenpet@fan.net.au

WANTED

WANTED TO BUY 1980s – early 90s Ford Falcon. Must have good body & interior, original paint. Ph: 02-6649-2870.

CLUBS

NATIONAL ALLERGY ASSOCIATION of Australia (NAAA) and ECO-CHOICE (our mail-order store). Enquiries; information; clinics; membership & catalogue. Contact NAAA, PO Box 48, HARRIS PARK, NSW 2150. Email: naaaauz@yahoo.com. Ph: 04-1324-1166.

AFFILIATED DONKEY SOCIETIES OF AUSTRALIA. For info on membership, magazines and help avail write to Mr Ralph Grinly, 18 Inverness Rd, STH PENRITH, NSW 2750. You will be contacted by the representative in your state.

CONTACTS

NEW SOUTH WALES

HORSEMAN SEEKS optimistic GR-minded horsewoman up to 50. Jim (GR142), C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

SINGLE MALE, n/s, s/d, artistic, outdoors, recently moved to Upper Hunter Valley, like to meet artistic lady, around 50 with contemporary outlook. Reply: Jim Q, (GR142), C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

ANSWERING A CONTACT AD?
Please put each letter in a separate stamped envelope addressed C/- GR. We will re-address & forward it. Don't forget to put the issue number on reply, i.e: Skye (GR 128) . . .

DEADLINES: GR143 – DEC 20TH
GR144 – FEB 28TH

CREATIVE EARTHY MALE, early 40s, co-parent, currently working as gardener, organic farmer (I lease 5 ac in Dural which I am setting up as permaculture educational centre/commercial biodynamic farm), tennis coach/agri business student & environmental magazine salesperson seeks female companion for bushwalking/art & craft activities, gardening & generally having fun. Please reply: chrisherden@bigpond.com or mobile 0414-840-005.

LIBRAN WOMAN, 50, attractive, small, quiet, loves nature & simple country life. Enjoys good food, wine & travel. Wanting to meet compassionate, caring, n/s, spiritual man. Reply: Jen (GR142), C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

FEMALE PISCEAN, 21 years old, seeking genuine friends, M/F, 18 – 35 of similar interests – vegetarianism, cooking, astrology, nature, natural therapies. I don't like smoking, drugs or animal cruelty! I'd like to get back to nature eventually. Please write: Alison, PO Box 339, OATLEY, NSW 2223.

INTERESTING, ATTRACTIVE, intelligent woman, 49. I enjoy good communication, humour, sharing, music, the bush, rain on the roof. Would like to correspond with like-minded man, friendship/r/ship. J (GR142), C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

QUEENSLAND

VEGETARIAN MALE, 48 years, intelligent, slim, n/s, n/d, naturally affectionate & caring. I enjoy the outdoors, gardening & cooking. Seeking a sincere, caring woman (25 to 45), or mother & child, to share simple country lifestyle. Wayne Pollard, PO Box 235, GIN GIN, Qld 4671. Ph: 07-4157-2736.

WOMAN SEEKING FRIENDSHIP with a creative, n/s, financially secure, health conscious man aged to 38. I'm 33, fit & healthy & a mum, currently living in Bundaberg. Reply to: rainbow10@telstra.easymail.com.au

VICTORIA

COUNTRY GUY, mid 30s, seeks male for mate, friendship. Interests: Organic gardening, meditation, yoga, massage, alternative healing practices, nudism, books, woodcraft, chess, art. All letters answered, photo app. JP (GR142), C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

WOMAN, FORTY-EIGHT, attractive, slim, introspective & sensitive with a preference for abstract thinking. Wishing to meet a man who is self-aware, emotionally mature & who also has a preference for abstract thinking. Preferred area – central Victoria, Melb/Geelong. Photo appreciated. Reply: Carol (GR142), PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

WIDOWER, 5' 4" tall, 55 yrs of age. Honest, caring, active, person, seeking female companion under own age. Own 130 ac self-suff, semi-isolated property central Vic. Only replies seeking genuine long-term r/ship. Reply: Widower (GR142), C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

TALL, SLIM, FIT, 60, balding, bearded vegetarian, listening, talking, few means, offers much, seeks partnership slim n/s unastrological woman, 45 – 50. Share life, love, laughter, sporadic beachcomb, some backpack, occasional hillclimb, odd campout. Will reply, photos/phones. Write: Harry (GR142), PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

SINGLE DAD, ONE SON, 46 yrs old, 6', OK looks, DTE, love the bush & nature. Have property central Vic, require slim lady to share life & dreams with, kids OK. Want to know more? Ring David, 0418-315-620 & leave a message.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SOUTH-EAST; mid forties, young-at-heart female, loves animals, music, enjoys life, is maturely built, enjoys beach & fishing. Seeks male smoker, social drinker – must have good sense of humour! – who enjoys life too, who wants to meet a female for friendship. Reply to: Ms M B, 6 Narkindie Park, NARACOORTE, SA 5271.

TASMANIA

MALE FORTY-FOUR, 175 cm, 80 kg, presentable, intelligent, practical, fit, healthy, n/s, s/d & GSOH. I enjoy country life, music, gardening, cuisine, home life, nature & much more! Seeking looked after lady, any nationality, with similar interests. Photo appreciated. Ed (GR142), C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

FEMALE, FORTY-TWO, worked o/s 10 yrs, now home, like to settle, try for family with male, 39 – 50ish, tall, burley, educated, travelled, humourous, humble, hearty – ready for commitment, children. Doesn't mind animals inside. I'm warm, earthy, feisty, esoteric leanings, into nature, arts, eclectic taste music. Photo appreciated, returned – all answered. Reply: Nancy, PMB 138, KATHERINE, NT 0852. Email: enlid@yahoo.com.au

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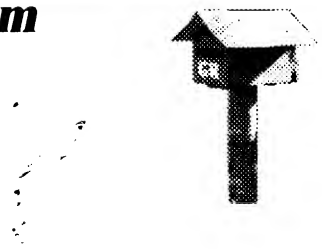
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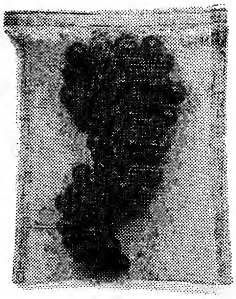
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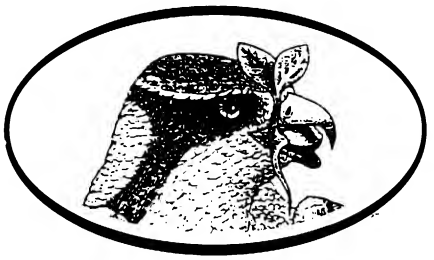


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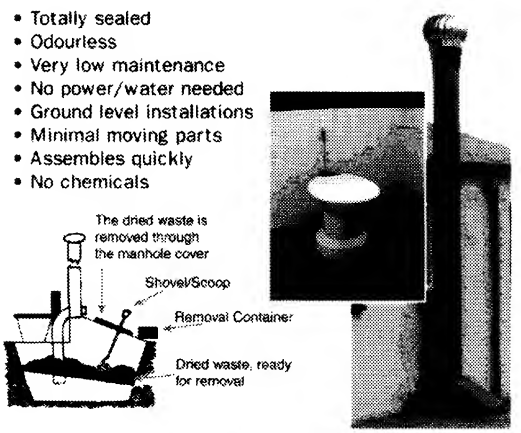
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